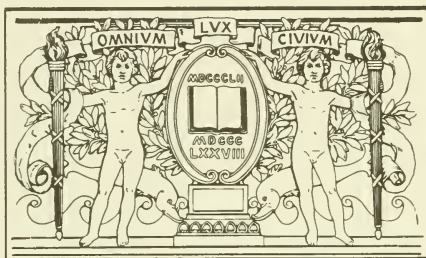




A Prince in the Garret

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Archibald C. Gunter

A Prince in The Garret

A NOVEL

By

ARCHIBALD CLAVERING GUNTER

AUTHOR OF

"MR. BARNES OF NEW YORK," "THE KING'S
STOCKBROKER," Etc., Etc.



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A PRINCE IN THE GARRET

CHAPTER I.

THE FORTUNE HUNTERS OF PARIS.

Paris had been glad. Paris was sad. The great Exposition of the year eighteen hundred and sixty-seven under the auspices of Louis Napoleon, Emperor of the French, was over, and the crowd of visitors from the four quarters of the world that had entered the boulevards of the Gallic Capital with full purses, and thronged its theatres and cafés, were going away with empty ones.

The enormous exhibition buildings in the Champ de Mars were closed, and tribes of wandering Kirghis, Bedouin Arabs and Algerines that had given exhibitions of life on the deserts of Africa and on the Steppes of Asia had folded up their tents and departed. Though the main boulevards of the great Gallic Capital were still full of the glory and glam-

our of the Second Empire, from its arteries of trade had been withdrawn many of the red corpuscles of Parisian life; that is, visiting foreigners with the means to pay extravagant prices for the luxuries and dainty nicknacks of costume and ornament for which the French Capital is celebrated.

After the manner of all such exhibitions and world's fairs, the grand International Exposition had left financial wreck and ruin behind it in the hotel and boarding house business. Among these financial catastrophes there was no one that threatened to be more disastrous than that of Madame Suzanne Perriqué's aristocratic pension in the Rue de Provence.

Situated quite near the broad Boulevard Haussman, Madame Perriqué's house, though rambling and old-fashioned, had been well filled by a heterogeneous clientele of men and women who had sought pleasant surroundings and endurable meals at prices that were little short of absolute beggary.

But with the end of the Exposition, Madame Perriqué's guests had drifted to the unknown, leaving behind them a deserted house. In fact, as Silas Squabbs of the State of Illinois, U. S., had grimly remarked on his departure as he settled his landlady's exorbitant bill: "After the boom comes the bust, my dear Madame Perriqué."

This direful prophecy, spoken in the American vernacular with a Yankee accent, the Parisian boarding house keeper understood perfectly and shuddered. Though Madame Suzanne Perriqué, from long residence in Paris was now French in her bearing, manner and even speech, she was by birth American. Originally Susan Priscilla Squanton of New England, she had married a gentleman named Perkins, the Paris agent of an American house importing French wines. Upon his death, in eighteen hundred and fifty-six, the widow Perkins had increased a somewhat slender income by setting up a girl's boarding school in the Rue du Rocher and had succeeded in attracting to her institution a few American misses as well as some English girls who had journeyed to Paris to obtain instruction either in French or music; a few years later she had removed her increasing school from her first location to a larger house in the Rue de Milan.

But as the ex-schoolmistress had grown old she had become avaricious, and some six months previous, actuated by a sudden desire of accumulating a fortune rapidly and tempted by the enormous prices she thought she could obtain from the concourse of visitors to the grand French Exposition, she had resigned the modest certainty of *maitresse d'école* in

the Rue du Rocher and engaged in the more financially ambitious but perilous occupation of *hotesse* in the big, rambling, old-fashioned house in the Rue de Provence.

In order to add to the glamour of her pension in the eyes of visiting Americans, Mrs. Perkins' cards now read "Madame Suzanne Perriqué," though to those who had known her before she made no great secret of her change of name.

And now, two days after the departure of Mr. Squabbs, who having been a Western land speculator aware of the baneful effects of booms, Madame Perriqué looking about her big deserted parlors, in which the lights had been turned very low to save gas bills, muttered to herself in heartsick tone: "After the boom comes the bust," and knew his prognostications had been correct. She thought of the mansion she had been compelled to lease for a year and shuddered at its emptiness, for nothing is so dishearteningly lonely as a big hotel or boarding house untenanted. Then remembering the uncompromising man of affairs who would come in less than a week to collect the month's rent in advance, and gazing at the unoccupied sofas, lounges and ottomans she had only partly paid for, Madame Perriqué's sigh had changed into a moan. She had muttered hysterically:

"Ruined!" and sunk down with a yellow laugh of despair into one of her many vacant arm chairs.

But that was yesterday!

The next evening all had changed!

The house in the Rue de Provence was brilliantly lighted and thronged to overflowing. It was as if the wand of an enchanter had been waved over Madame Perriqué's empty mansion and it had become crowded. Struggling for Perriqué's rooms, content to pay in advance her wildest prices, were a heterogeneous mixture of Parisians, Germans, English sporting-men, Turks and Jews, with a wandering Greek or two thrown in and an occasional baron or count, some of whose names did not appear in the Almanac de Gotha—part of the residue of the Grand Exposition.

For despite the fading glamour of Louis Napoleon's Empire, his ill-fated Mexican expedition having just ended with the execution of the unfortunate Maximilian, Paris was still the Mecca of adventurous spirits, and its boulevards and streets were still patrolled by men about town, *chevaliers d'industrie* and *petits crevés*, some in pursuit of women, some in pursuit of pleasure, all in pursuit of gold.

From her large dining-salon arose the clatter of many noisy knives and forks, the clinking of glasses

showing that wine was flowing, and the chatter of half the tongues of Europe making an after-dinner masculine Babel.

For Madame Perriqué's boarding house was curiously filled *only with men!* With the exception of its presiding goddess, there was no Eve in this Adam's Eden—and Madame Perriqué was almost masculine enough to be considered of the sterner sex.

This perhaps had been produced by her autocratic sway as a schoolmistress, the grim landlady having brought with her a certain academic severity of voice and demeanor from her schoolroom.

Yet over the dining-table this evening the austere-visaged Perriqué was all smiles, though there was a peculiar nervous uncertainty in her sharp grey eyes; perhaps because she could hardly believe them, for during the meal once or twice Suzanne bit her skinny fingers to be quite sure her sudden prosperity was real.

In addition, the presence of nothing but men in the house seemed extraordinary to her, though the autocracy of the schoolmistress, which leavened her intercourse with her own sex, had always made her house unpopular with ladies. Still Madame Perriqué's authoritative manner had almost coerced a

few of her former pupils, who had visited the Parisian Exposition with their husbands, to be her guests. This was instanced by sweet Mrs. Montjoy, who as little Stella Bascom had been under the rule of the stern Suzanne in the Rue du Rocher, pleading to her husband after a day's sojourn in Madame Perriqué's boarding house: "Take me away from here, quick, Jimmy, or I'll get to curtsying to her, assuming the first position, toes turned out, and reciting French verbs when my old dragon of a schoolmistress comes into the dining-room. Oh, those terrific eyes of hers!"

But in her success this evening, a full house making the landlady happy, despite her fifty grim years, Madame Perriqué is very affable to her new lodgers. She even jokes with the Count de Pichoir about that young aristocrat's reported numerous conquests in court circles; she chats pleasantly as to the drama he is running with Monsieur Paul Rousette, the manager of the Cluny Theatre, who for some unknown reason has this day given up his luxurious bachelor quarters in the Boulevard Saint Germain near his playhouse and crossed the river to accept her indifferent accommodations.

So, despite the absence of ladies, the dinner goes pleasantly on, the gentlemen complimenting their

new hostess effusively in several different languages, and all seeming very eager to gain her good will.

Towards the close of the meal, Alphonse, Madame Perriqué's chief factotum, coming out of the dining room, grins to himself: "A noisy crowd, but there's money in them. The hum of many boarders means wages for Alphonse—back wages, unpaid wages, now about to be liquidated in full." Then he slaps his hand to his head and a Gallic grin ripples his features as he asks himself: "Who the deuce is the poor American girl these men are all so eager for?" A moment after he ejaculates: "*Diable*, here's another; and every man of them boulevardiers!"

For a solemn looking Turkish gentleman, whose religion is indicated by a red fez, stands before the *garçon*, and slipping a ten franc bill into his hand, whispers a few sententious words.

"Certainly, your Excellency, Hadji Pacha, I will inform you instantly; remember my signal—three taps on the back," rejoins Alphonse, pocketing the note.

"*Shukur Allah*," replies the Turk, "I will remember. Three taps on the back the moment Mademoiselle Gertrude Eloise Hammond of Missesseeep, Amerique, enters Madame Perriqué's portals." Consulting a letter, the Turk passes to the smoking room,

where a number of gentlemen have congregated.

Quite shortly after, in his place, stands a Greek of diplomatic appearance, who wears a broad red band suggestive of a foreign embassy. With great circumspection, he beckons Alphonse to private interview. Whispering a few words and placing a five-franc piece in the servitor's eager hand, Monsieur Marco Acropolis smiles with Mediterranean suavity as Alphonse rejoins: "Certainly, I'll give you this signal—three taps on the back. Don't forget it!"

"*Cito! Saint Constantine*, I'll never forget that. Was that not a ring at the front door?" and the Greek turns eagerly towards the main hall of the establishment.

"No, that was only Madame Perriqué ringing for the cook to put out the gas in the kitchen."

"Ah, very well, but don't forget to notify me the moment Mademoiselle Hammond arrives," remarked the Greek gentleman earnestly, then he suggested: "Couldn't you speak to Madame Perriqué. The room given me is decidedly small and uncomfortable."

"Don't think there's anything better in the house unless you're willing to pay fifty francs a day. But there are other boarding houses in the Boulevard Haussman that are not so full," observed Alphonse, the nonchalance of success in his voice.

"No, no; this is the one. This is the boarding house—the one I'll stay in!" and Marco Acropolis, taking a letter from his pocket book carefully consulted it as he wandered towards the smoking-room, leaving the waiter behind him rubbing his head in a dazed, astonished way.

"This is exceedingly curious," thought Alphonse. "Every one of these boulevardiers is anxious to see an American young lady, Mademoiselle Gertrude Eloise Hammond, and some of them have gone further and told me that she has been made poor by the death of her parents from yellow fever in Mississippi. Besides, every man of them has a letter. *Sapristi*, they are as anxious for her as if she were a prize ticket in the Havana lottery. Every time the front door bell rings, they rise like a covey of partridges."

For at this moment the entrance gong having sounded, the smoking-room was instantly deserted, every gentleman in it having sought some post of vantage where he could see who came into the hallway of the mansion.

Strolling to the door, Alphonse found a cab with some baggage on it standing in the street, and quite shortly ushered in a young Englishman and a slip of a girl costumed in a light traveling dress of the latest fashion. She was apparently either exceed-

ingly bashful or very much embarrassed, for she shrank timidly from the eager gaze of the numerous gentlemen inspecting her arrival, and clung nervously to her escort's arm.

Crinoline, which had reigned for the last ten years, was being gradually superseded by the pannier. Decked with one of these and assuming that languid walk called at that time "the Grecian bend," the young lady glided along the hallway, her soft brown hair dressed in the latest waterfall style, supplemented by two long, luxuriant, fashionable angel-curls, her bright blue eyes raised anxiously to the gentleman at her side.

"You do the talking, Jack, dear," she whispered into the ear of the man upon whose arm she leaned, as Alphonse showed them into a small untenanted reception room.

Acting on this hint, Jack Horton, after consulting a newspaper he carried in his hand, said with English abruptness: "Would you kindly tell Madame—" he looked at the paper once more—"Madame Perriqué, the mistress of this boarding house, that I would like to see her. I called in reference to this advertisement as regards lodgings."

"Your cards," suggested Alphonse, politely, but sententiously.

This was answered by the English girl, who remarked diffidently: "We—we haven't any cards."

Whereupon Alphonse, closing the door upon them, withdrew to carry word to his mistress, though he was compelled to pause once or twice on his way to shake his head at gentlemen who looked at him inquiringly.

Left by themselves, the English girl, who apparently is scarcely more than seventeen, utters a merry little giggle, partly of embarrassment, partly of pleasure, and pouts: "As if I could have a card when we have only been married thirty-six hours. Oh, Jack," an expression of happy dismay running over her almost childlike features—"ours was a very wild runaway match. Miss Georgina Fortescue yesterday morning in London—Now I'm Mrs. Georgina——"

But she gets no further, for her husband putting his arm about her and giving her sweet lips an ardent kiss, whispers: "Horton, darling wifey! Mrs. John Winter Horton!" Then he growls: "Oh, if I only dared take you with me. But our union must be kept *sub rosa until* we have squared matters with my aunt and your uncle."

"Yes, isn't it horrible," pouts the girl, "to be dependent upon relatives."

"And this brute of a letter reaching me right on

my arrival from rich auntie," mutters the young husband, "commanding that I join her in Cannes immediately. If I took you with me, my pet, in that little Mediterranean watering place, Auntie would probably meet us at the station. Anyway, she would surely learn I have a wife with me. But I'll be back in a week, Duckie," he remarks confidently. "You see, I couldn't very well leave you at a hotel." He glances at his almost childlike bride; then looks around the pleasantly furnished reception room and observes: "It seems to me this will be a very comfortable place for your stay during my absence, Sweet One, though I wish there weren't so many infernal men in it."

"Oh, Jack, jealous already!" half laughs the bride.

The groom is about to answer this question as it should be answered, when the young couple are interrupted by the entrance of Madame Suzanne Perriqué, whose grim visage has the smile of welcome to additional paying guests.

Even as she comes in, she is speaking with business directness: "You wish to see me in regard to apartments, I presume." Then her eyes rest on the young lady and a smile of recognition passes over her grim face, while the bride, with a start of dismay, shud-

ders to herself: "Good heavens, my terrible old schoolmistress!"

"Why, Georgina Fortescue!" ejaculates Madame Perriqué. "How is your respected uncle?"

To this, her former pupil, giving a schoolgirl curtsy, stammers: "Oh, Mrs. Perkins, he's very well, but I——" Then a horrified thought flashes through her. "If I confess to her my runaway marriage, she's sure to telegraph my uncle!"

Noting a look of inquiry upon Jack's face, Madame Perriqué observes: "I gave up my boarding school six months ago, just after you were taken away, Georgina, and am now in charge of this pension."

"But you—you used to be Mrs. Perkins!" ejaculates the girl.

"For business purposes," replies the ex-schoolmistress, "I have given my name a French flavor. Remember, Georgina, I am now Madame Perriqué." Then turning her eyes inquiringly upon the bridegroom, she remarks: "This gentleman is your—your brother, of course, Georgina, alone at this time in the evening with you."

"Yes—yes, of—of course, my—my brother Jack," stammers the bride. For into her mind has flown: "Good heavens, if my old schoolmistress knows I

am on a surreptitious honeymoon, my London uncle will be informed of my elopement like a flash."

Upon this interview the young husband has looked with a rather perplexed air. But Suzanne interrupts Mr. Jack Horton's meditations by saluting him with a prim curtsy and remarking: "Mr. Jack Fortescue, I am happy to make your acquaintance."

"Oh—ah—yes, of course, how do you do?" replies the astonished Jack, giving her a hasty bow. He would now probably explain his relationship to Georgina did not a frantic pinch from his bride suggest some new complication in their elopement.

"Your sister, as you know, was for six years under my charge. I shall be happy to receive her again," observes Madame Perriqué, briefly.

At this there is an affrighted: "No, no!" from the bride, who remembers the severe régime of her ex-schoolmistress.

But she is silenced by the landlady remarking sternly: "Georgina!"

At this word, her few months' absence from the martinet's rule seems to be nothing, and the child-like bride drops a little curtsy and stammers timidly: "Yes, ma'am"—such is the force of habit.

Apparently thinking the young lady should have no voice in the matter, Madame Perriqué is now

addressing Georgina's husband, saying: "Mr. Fortescue, you wish to take rooms with your sister at this pension?"

"Not for myself, but I wish to secure a quiet home for her, as I am compelled to make a rapid journey to Cannes," replies Jack, looking at his watch and reflecting that he has none too many minutes to catch the Lyons night express.

"There could be no safer place for her in Paris," observes the ex-schoolmistress. "No young girl in my house has any chance to flirt with gentlemen."

Remembering the number of men about the premises, Jack replies cordially: "Magnificent idea, Madame Perriqué; magnificent idea! This is just the home for her."

"Oh, Jack!" utters Georgina reproachfully.

But Jack, thinking of the long mustached dandies lounging in evening dress about the smoking-room as they passed it by, continues: "I thoroughly agree with you, Madame Perriqué, in prohibiting all flirtation."

"I couldn't think of taking her without having full authority," replies Suzanne, assuming a schoolmistress air.

"Oh, mercy!" flutters the newly-made Mrs. Horton.

But Madame Perriqué, turning to the young hus-

band, who is wondering whether his bride will be happy with this prim-visaged old gentlewoman, drives all thought except jealousy out of the bridegroom's head, by observing: "You see, when she was at school under me, Georgina had a habit—of course, I can be frank to her brother?"

"Certainly; very frank!" Jack's eyes have grown big and he is grimly prodding his boot with his umbrella.

As for the bride, she is confusedly wondering to herself: "What girlish escapade is she going to tell him?"

"Your sister had such a habit of attracting the eyes of men," remarks Madame Perriqué, reflectively.

"Indeed!" exclaims the boyish husband severely, at this unpleasant revelation.

But the bride breaks in: "Not intentionally, Jack; not intentionally!"

"I am afraid not always *un-intentionally*," observes the ex-schoolmistress. "Several times was I compelled to lecture her, and twice, I believe, to punish her for accepting bouquets thrown in at the window by a handsome stockbroker who lived opposite."

This revelation of a sister's infirmity has a terrible effect upon the putative brother, who mutters to himself: "Damnation!" and clenches his hand.

"Three times also for sending out written communications——"

"But they were only notes to buy candy!" half screams the bride.

"Addressed to an unknown but very handsome man, if I recollect the name, called Gaspard."

"Gaspard! Hell's fire! Gaspard!" snarls Jack, under his breath. Then he turns jealous eyes upon his fluttering bride and, unmollified by her pretty pouts, remarks severely: "You—you have my full authority, Madame Perriqué. Take complete charge of her during my absence—no flirtations!"

"My terms are one hundred and fifty francs a week. I'll order the luggage sent up," and the landlady leaves the reception room.

The door has no sooner closed behind her than Georgina throws herself into her husband's arms, whispering indignantly: "Jack, Jack, don't you dare believe her!" A little sob comes into her voice as she explains: "Gaspard was the beau of an American scholar, Gertie Hammond, not my sweetheart!"

"Then why did you not deny it?" returns the bridegroom savagely.

"How could I?" falters the bride. "Under Perkins' awful eyes I felt as if I were in her schoolroom again." Then she half pouts, half laughs: "Now

with your authority as my brother, I shall be kept close as a convent girl till you come back. I shan't have a bit of fun." She stamps her foot petulantly.

"Not *flirtatious* fun," sneers Mr. Jack, who, boy-like, has grown suddenly jealous. "I'm glad I'm leaving you under such a firm woman."

"Oh, I'm afraid you only half believe me," utters Georgina, piteously, "when I made such sacrifices to become your wife."

"Then why didn't you tell Madame Perriqué you were my wife?" asks Jack in sudden and savage suspicion.

"Oh, my Heaven, you reproach me for that. Why, can't you see, I didn't dare to, Stupid. I was trembling all the time for fear Suzanne's argus eyes would see my wedding ring through my glove. My ex-schoolmistress would have immediately telegraphed my uncle that I was eloping with you. Then he would have notified your aunt, and then—Oh, Jack, I've got to take off my wedding ring." With teary eyes and a long-drawn sigh, Georgina hastily pulls off her glove and withdraws from her slight finger the golden band of marriage. "What shall I do with it, Jack? If Perriqué sees it, she'll suspect, inquire and discover everything, and——"

"Give it to me," says Jack, promptly, and slips

the ring into his pocket. "Likewise your wedding certificate."

"Yes, she's certain to go through my trunks," falters young Mrs. Horton, surrendering the prized document. "She's the most prying thing in the whole world. And now since I make such sacrifices for you so that you can break the matter to your aunt at the proper time, you—you must believe in me," and the childlike bride puts her graceful arms about her young husband's neck.

"Of course, I believe," answers Jack, kissing her rapturously. "I believe you're the most attractive sweetheart in the world and I want to keep you very—very safe while I'm absent."

"Oh, if that's the way you feel about it, Suzanne can keep me close as a nun," replies Georgina devotedly, and favors Jack with caresses that make him think his few days' absence from her will be an eternity.

But he forces himself to assume a courageous mien and whispers encouragingly: "It's only for a week, darling. You have enough money, haven't you?"

"Yes, Jack, plenty. I—I shan't eat many bonbons while—while you're away." The tears are coming very close to the blue eyes at thought of parting. "You'll—you'll write to me often?"

"Every day, darling."

"But be sure to make them brotherly letters, for Perkins will try to inspect my correspondence in some way. She always did at school," suggests the young lady cautiously.

"Certainly, mine shall be the epistles of an ardent brother," half laughs the young husband. "Besides, I'll telegraph you immediately I arrive in Cannes."

"Yes, but don't fail to sign it Jack Fortescue, or Perkins will discover you are not my brother."

"Oh, I'll simply sign it Jack. You understand what Jack means, don't you?" The young fellow's voice is very uxorious.

"Yes, Jack means my husband!" whispers the bride simply but tenderly, and puts up her dewy lips for another kiss which she receives with young Horton's whole soul.

At this moment, Madame Perriqué, entering abruptly, says affably: "You seem very affectionate to your brother, Georgina."

"I am!" cries the girl, enthusiastically. "Oh, there never was such a brother!" and taking advantage of the situation, she gives Jack several additional sweet kisses, murmuring: "Darling, sweet one."

These are returned with interest, as her bridegroom lards his caresses with: "Honey Bird! Love

Note! Beauty Dove!" emphasizing each of these pretty appellations with a most impassioned caress.

"Humph, a most affectionate brother!" remarks the ex-schoolmistress. She glances at the clock and suggests: "But if you wish to catch the Mediterranean night express, you will have to tell your hackman to drive in a hurry."

"I'll go to the door with you," falters Georgina, and Madame Perriqué sees the girl run out to her portals with the young man, and give him another kiss and hears her whisper: "Telegraph me, Jack; telegraph me."

Then the young man cries to the *cocher*: "*Gare Mazas*, in a hurry!"

As he gets in the cab, his bride, returning to the reception room, runs to the window, looks eagerly out and whispers piteously: "Oh, he's driving off. It's too dark to see him; Jack!" Then the poor girl falteringly sinks down in a chair; in her mind only: "He's gone—Jack—my husband!" as she puts her hand to her swimming eyes.

Looking upon her new charge's emotion, Madame Perriqué reflects: "The most affectionate brother and sister I've ever seen." Anxious to return to her other duties, she says abruptly: "Georgina!"

But receiving no answer, for the bride is think-

ing despairingly: "What shall I do till Jack comes back?" Madame Perriqué calls out sharply: "Miss Fortescue!" and places her hand authoritatively upon the delicate shoulder that is throbbing with the misery of separation.

"Oh—ah—yes—you mean me!" gasps Georgina, starting up.

"Whom else can I mean, my dear?" answers her old schoolmistress. "That's your name, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes, that's—yes—of course, that's my name," falters young Mrs. Horton.

"Then dry your eyes and I'll show you up to a nice little room I have for you."

Some minutes after this as Madame Perriqué conducts Georgina through the main hallway towards the staircase, Suzanne's acute eyes grow astonished at the sensation her new charge makes.

Though a good many of Madame Perriqué's gentlemen guests, tired of waiting for the arrival of the young lady they have been asking Alphonse about, have wandered off to the theatres, cafés chantants and other evening amusements of the capital, enough are left behind to produce extreme wonderment in the ex-schoolmistress' mind. These lounge about the hall. Striving to attract the attention of her faltering charge, Hadji Pacha, the Turk, salaams rever-

ently, placing his hand upon his heart and rolling his eyes as if one of the houris of Mohammed's heaven were before them. The Greek diplomatist, Monsieur Acropolis, bows to the carpet before Georgina, while several other gallants of the boulevards stroke their moustachios in their Parisian way and with their eyes express extraordinary emotional intensity and fervid gallantry as if the young lady who had entered Madame Perriqué's portals was a being who had on the instant excited in their Gallic minds sudden and overpowering passion.

These unexpected attentions seem not altogether displeasing to the bride, for Georgina has a fairly good opinion of her personal charms and perhaps has indulged in a few of the flirtations her former instructress had charged her with.

But though the girl in her light, pretty costume looks very diffidently attractive and encounters masculine eyes with a childlike innocence and grace that is extremely winning, Madame Perriqué can see no reason for such an abrupt outburst of masculine devotion.

Reflecting upon this, Suzanne, as she escorts her charge upstairs, is suddenly struck by a curious idea. Never before has she seen such an extraordinary display of Gallic rapture for any of her lady boarders,

and she has had some quite pretty, exceedingly charming, and very flirtatious ones during her short experience. To herself she remarks: "These men all seem to have the girl-hunting madness in them. If I want a quiet life with Georgina, I've got to put a stop to it—sharply, too!"

Consequently, they have no sooner arrived at the little chamber set apart for the putative maiden than she says abruptly: "Now, my child, put on some plainer frock before you return downstairs."

"Why, this is the very simplest I have in my trunk," remarks Georgina, proud of a hurriedly purchased trousseau.

"Then you must have a most extraordinary outfit for a child like you," replies Perriqué, abruptly. "Rigged out in this bride-like, precocious affair, you will have half the men in the house running after you. You remember your brother's instructions to me. You don't suppose he would be pleased if you had half a dozen love affairs with those rather presuming gentlemen downstairs."

"Yes, I'm—I'm very sure Jack wouldn't like that," mutters the bride with a muffled giggle.

"Imagine how your brother would reproach me if he discovered you were entangled with that Turk who looked at you as if he would like to make you one

of his harem, or engaged to marry that stolid German, who whispered, "*Ach, Himmel, meine angebetete Gottin.*"

"No, Jack would knock the German's head off," half laughs, half shudders, Georgina.

"That being the case," answers Suzanne in affable primness, "a proper toilette will show these men that you are altogether too juvenile for their attentions. Now we will soon have you in one of your old school frocks."

"Old *school* frocks!" jeers the bride. "Where shall I get them?"

"You carelessly left some of them behind you when you were taken away from my academy."

"Oh, murder!" screams Georgina, mentally. Then remembering she had been in short frocks when she left Mrs. Perkins' pension, she queries anxiously: "But you didn't *keep* them?"

"Being an economical woman, I keep *everything*," remarks Madame Perriqué. "In one of them you will not attract the attention of my gentlemen boarders. Do up your hair in a modest pig-tail."

"A modest pig-tail!" echoes Georgina defiantly. "I shall look like a child."

"As you are!"

But these words have a very unpleasant effect

upon the new-made bride. She picks up her purse from the table and remarks self-assertively: "Under the circumstances, Madame Perriqué, I think I will leave your house and go to a hotel." But her nascent rebellion is suddenly destroyed, as she opens her pocket book she utters with a gasp of dismay: "Why, you have taken my money!"

"All except ten francs," replies the landlady, "the balance that was left after paying your two weeks board bill of three hundred francs. Besides, I shall not permit you to leave my house—your brother having placed you in my charge." Then some curious suspicion entering the acute schoolmistress' mind, her grey eyes seem to gaze through the bride as she terrifies Georgina into submission by querying: "He's your brother, isn't he?"

"Certainly, he's—he's my brother," falters young Mrs. Horton. "My brother Jack—didn't I tell you?"

"Then, armed with his authority, I shall do my duty by you. I consider you as much under my rule as when you left my school six months ago, child. When you have made a proper toilette for a young girl, come to me in the parlor. There you can play on the piano and help me entertain my guests. Girl's spirits, my dear, and youthful innocence," observes

the *ex-maitresse d'école*, blandly, "but no flirtations —remember that!"

"Yes, ma'am," sighs Georgina, feeling quite helpless and schoolgirly with so little money in her pocket, alone in Paris.

"Your old nurse, Madelon, who acts as my maid, will come in to assist you," continues Suzanne, blandly.

"Oh, mercy, that hateful old Madelon will make me look like a baby," half-giggles Georgina as Suzanne departs from her. Then the poor bride smites her hands together and mutters: "Well, if this isn't the most disappointing elopement I ever saw!" and, gazing ruefully upon her traveling trunk containing her tabooed trousseau, utters two little hysterical cries and sheds half a dozen savage tears.

Just at this moment, Madame Perriqué, after a few hasty directions to Madelon, reaches the head of the stairway to descend to her guests. Here, chancing to glance down at her salon filled with lounging Adams, the landlady pauses, starts and reflects: "Every other boarding house about me deserted and mine full of men with girl-hunting eyes. I know those facial expressions. I've seen them in gallants wandering round the walls of my school in the Rue

du Rocher. What girl do they hunt? What is the reason of their pursuit?"

Then a wild yell of laughter in a familiar voice ascending to her ears from her dining-room, Suzanne suddenly clenches her fists and ejaculates: "My God, it is some eccentricity of that villain Ambigue!"

CHAPTER II.

THE CURIOUS BOARDING HOUSE IN THE RUE DE PROVENCE.

Descending her staircase and hearing another wild burst of laughter and the further clinking of glasses in her dining-room, Madame Perriqué mutters frantically to herself: "That fiend Ambigue is drinking me up alive. Will that demon never leave the dining-room?" Calling Alphonse to her, she directs: "Clear up the dinner table as quickly as possible."

"Yes, ma'am," replies the waiter briskly. "That's easily done. The guests have already cleaned it so a fly would starve on it."

"Have they?" snarls the boarding house mistress. "Then they will probably starve at breakfast." With this she commands: "Tell Ambigue that I wish to see him in the reception-room," to which place she departs, a very austere look on her prim old face.

The waiter is about to do her bidding when he is approached by a gentleman in immaculate evening dress, the broad rolling velvet collar of his coat and

his tight pantaloons apparently cut by the best Parisian tailors.

To the *garçon* the young man announces haughtily: "I am le Comte de Pichoir."

"Ah, Monsieur le Comte," and the waiter bows obsequiously as he recognizes a name of the old *noblesse*.

"I have a complaint to make," utters the young noble gloomily. "I sat down to dinner; I got none. The man who sat next to me ate mine and, *diable*, everyone else's. He has an appetite like a steam engine. He creates a famine."

"Ah, yes; I know him," answers Alphonse briskly. "He's Moliere Shakespeare Ambigue, the dramatist."

"Then Moliere Shakespeare Ambigue, the dramatist, must not sit by me at dinner again. I will be starved no more."

"In that case Monsieur will have to go to another boarding house," observes Alphonse, stifling a giggle.

"*Morbleu*, this is the pension I wish," answers the young man imperatively. Lowering his voice, he continues: "Alphonse, I have a question to ask."

"*Ciel*, this is the twenty-first," reflects the waiter.

"You can tell me whether a young American lady lives in this house?"

"I can," answers Alphonse eagerly.

"Thank you," replies the Count.

"Thank *you*," suggests the servitor, holding out an eager hand.

"For what?" observes the young Parisian vacantly.

"For the money Monsieur was about to give me."

"Ah, I understand—of course, here is a *pour boire*," and the Count, pulling out a not very well filled portemonnaie, hands him a couple of francs. "You said you could tell me if an American lady lives here. The American I refer to is young and poor."

"Poor?" giggles the *garçon*. "You don't know Madame Perriqué. Her charges prevent any *poor* people coming into her house." Then Alphonse asks curiously: "Monsieur le Comte, the name of this lady?"

"Mademoiselle Gertrude Hammond, of Missesseeep in Amerique," is the unhesitating reply. "Do you know her?"

"Know her? I know her intimately."

"*Ciel!*" cries Henri joyfully.

"By reputation," answers the waiter. "She hasn't arrived."

"Then you expect her?"

"Nearly everyone in the house expects her."

"Aha, I am a distant relative."

"The twenty-first distant relative," muses the dazed waiter.

"I am here to meet her," continues Henri. "Notify me immediately when Mademoiselle arrives," and the Count turns haughtily away.

"I will," cries Alphonse, striding after him, "I will give you this signal—three taps on the back—*comprenez?*" and he favors Henri with the same signal he had given to twenty other men.

But as Alphonse is in the act of doing this, the Count steps rapidly into the hallway, murmuring: "A noise at the front door—can it be she?"

Looking after him, the waiter chuckles: "My twenty-first signal. They're all the same, so I can't make a mistake. *Sapristi*, there will be trouble in this house when Mademoiselle Gertrude Hammond of Missesseeep arrives." He smiles again as a couple of servitors carrying some trunks placarded in large letters, "A. de M.," pass through the hall. These are followed by several gentlemen, among them the Turk and the Greek, inspecting the luggage with very careful eyes.

"*Diable*, they think that is the baggage of Mademoiselle Gertrude Hammond," laughs the waiter.

But he is interrupted by the Count returning to

him and saying gloomily: "A—'A' doesn't stand for Gertrude, and 'M' doesn't indicate Hammond. Whose trunks are those?"

"That's part of the baggage of Armande de Millefleurs."

"Oh, the leading lady of the Theatre Cluny," remarks the Count.

"Yes, to-day she engaged the best apartment in the house. She will arrive immediately after the performance this evening. This is the first installment of her luggage."

"Ah, yes," observes the young boulevardier in uninterested nonchalance, "the greatest coquette in all Paris," and goes disappointedly away.

"Now I'll see if I cannot get a chance at the dining-table and deliver Madame Perriqué's message to Ambigue," thinks the waiter.

He is about to leave the main salon, when he is interrupted by an imploring voice saying in timid tones: "Madame Perriqué; where are you, Madame Perriqué?"

Glancing at the owner of the voice, Alphonse, who knows everything that goes on in the house, remarks placidly to himself: "Oho, our new child boarder."

The adolescent bride's appearance justifies his observation.

Under the hands of Madelon, young Mrs. Horton has been transformed into a demure schoolgirl. With her hair braided into a luxuriant pig-tail that reaches below her slight waist and dressed in one of her old school frocks which had been short six months before, but is now, by reason of her continued growth, sufficiently abbreviated to display not only two high-laced, high-heeled bottines tasseled after the manner of the time, but also some inches of tight white silk stockings, Georgina seems quite juvenile enough to be still in the school-room. A timid though pouting agitation adds to her a childlike appearance.

Thinking that the pout indicates hunger, Alphonse steps up to her and says politely: "Calm yourself, *petite*; would you like some bread and milk?"

"No!" answers Georgina with an angry stamp of her little foot.

"Oh!" remarks Alphonse, and quietly withdraws.

While young Mrs. Horton half sobs: "Bread and milk! Cracky, what a metamorphosis. Half an hour ago a bride and now a chit. Oh, isn't it terrible, I can't tell my horrible old schoolmistress that I'm Jack's wife," and sinks droopingly into an arm-chair.

Her brown study is so distracting that the young

lady doesn't notice that her entry has produced a sensation among the gentlemen guests. A French officer who has just returned from Louis Napoleon's unfortunate Mexican expedition pulls a long zouave moustache complacently over his lips and pushes back the short dark hair from his forehead to display a scar he had received at Orizaba, thinking his martial appearance will help him with the young lady.

About this time the Count de Pichoir, hearing a girl's voice with Anglo-Saxon accent, saunters into the salon, and assumes a romantic position; while Hadji Pacha, murmuring: "*Mashallah*, perhaps it is she," enters from the smoking-room, sighs, bows and takes a pose of Ottoman devotion.

In a moment these gallants would be clustering around the youthful Georgina, whose sitting position does not disclose the juvenile brevity of her skirts, did not Madame Perriqué, coming in briskly from her reception-room, interrupt their attentions.

"So she's up to her old tricks again—getting the eyes of every man upon her," reflects the ex-school-mistress, severely. Raising her voice, she cries sharply: "Georgina!"

But the bride's thoughts are far away. She is sighing mentally: "Oh, Jack, my Jack! I'm so lonely."

"*Georgina Fortescue!*"

"Oh—ah—yes," stammers young Mrs. Horton.
"Of course, that's my name."

Anxious to stop the sudden and ardent admiration of her masculine guests for her protege, the landlady says abruptly: "Gentlemen, this is a child, Georgina Fortescue, who was under my charge once as a schoolmistress and has now been placed in my care again," and discovers to her astonishment that her words have an immediate and potent effect.

The Count turns nonchalantly away with a mental: "*Diable!*"

The Turkish Pacha is about to retire to the smoking-room, murmuring: "*Bishmillah*, disappointment," and the officer from Mexico seems to have no further interest in the fascinations of the young lady.

This dearth of masculine admiration doesn't seem to affect Georgina very greatly. She glances disdainfully at the backs of her swains, reflecting quite contentedly: "Not a man of them is a marker to my Jack."

"Child," commands Madame Perriqué blandly, "come with me into the music-room and show the gentlemen how nicely you play the piano."

"With your permission, Madame," observes Henri,

bowing indifferently, "I prefer literature," and producing a copy of the *Figaro*, he seats himself beneath a convenient gas light.

The sudden change of front in her guests strikes Perriqué as extremely strange. Anxious to discover its reason, she suggests: "Hadji Pacha and Monsieur Acropolis, my pupil will be very pleased to play for you this evening. She used to execute quite well 'The Heart Bowed Down.'"

But "The Heart Bowed Down" doesn't seem to appeal to the Turk or the Athenian, who follow Suzanne and her charge rather sulkily, though Monsieur Acropolis, who has a Greek eye for beauty, observes that the child boarder under her simple muslin frock has a prettily rounded figure and that the short skirt, as it sways over the little crinoline, discloses two exceedingly graceful and well developed ankles for one so young.

Perhaps noticing his glance, young Mrs. Horton gives furtively one or two ineffective plucks to lengthen her jupe as she glides into the music-room, though she pokes out her tasseled bottines defiantly as she slouches down at the piano and performs "The Heart Bowed Down" with such agitated vigor of action and discordancy of tone that Madame Perriqué's teeth get on edge.

But this produces no criticism from her old mistress, whose mind is now agitated by but one proposition: "Why are all these men in my house? If they are in pursuit of a girl, it is evident that Georgina is not the one." Pondering over this, as her ex-pupil attacks "*The Battle of Prague*" with such frightful effect that both the Turk and the Greek sneak quietly out of the room, a horrible fear now enters Perriqué's mind: "Is there anything criminal in the matter? Is this some secret meeting like the Orsini bomb conspirators of ten years ago against the Emperor of France, or some conclave of those red cap agitators under the seditious Flourens? If so, I'll find myself in the Mazas prison some direful day," shudders Perriqué.

This consideration places pallor on her withered cheeks; and oblivious of the awful imitation of Austrian cannon with which the bride is now bombarding the piano, Suzanne glides trembling away to the reception-room, where she goes into a nervous and affrighted revery, muttering: "If it is that devil *Ambigue*?"

In the main parlor, however, the discordancy of Georgina's music is drowned by a burst of hilarious laughter rising dominantly from the dining-room.

Folding up his paper with a snarl and stepping to

Alphonse, Henri demands of Alphonse: "Who's making that infernal din?"

"Moliere Shakespeare Ambigue, the dramatist of the future," is the answer.

"*Diable*, then we'll reserve him for the future," grins the Count, pleased at his own wit.

"That's what the world has already done for poor Ambigue," observes the *garçon*. Anxious to be considered equally brilliant, he continues: "Permit me to tell you, Monsieur le Comte, this Ambigue is a great man, though nobody knows it except me. I've seen him up in his garret where he lives, under the eaves, and admire him."

"What for?" sneers the Count.

"I admire him, Monsieur, as he puts on black stockings to conceal the holes in his black boots. I admire him more as he glues black sticking-plaster on his big toes to hide the rents of his black stockings. I admire him because he struts as if the earth were beneath his feet when the universe is on top of the poor devil grinding him to pieces."

This panegyric has been listened to with a grin by the young Comte de Pichoir; he now asks sharply and suspiciously: "Then how the deuce did Ambigue contrive to get on the good side of Perriqué?"

"He didn't," answers the waiter sadly. "She's

going to turn him out to-morrow—owes four months' board."

"*Sapristi*," remarks the Count, passing his hand over his forehead dubiously, "he has just had two bottles of wine in the dining-room, where he is entertaining Paul Rousette, the manager of the Theatre Cluny."

This announcement produces an extraordinary effect upon Alphonse, who rolls his eyes about unbelievably as he gasps: "Ambigue, the dramatist, had two bottles of wine?"

"Certainly; two bottles of Cliquot of the best vintage."

"Ambigue, the dramatist—*two* bottles of *Cliquot*?" The waiter almost reels with surprise. Then he suddenly exclaims: "But Madame Perriqué refused them?"

"She did not!"

"Impossible!"

The glasses below are still clinking and, another burst of laughter coming to their ears, Henri suggests laughingly: "There's the proof. The two bottles are coming up the stairs."

"No, only one of them," remarks the *garçon*, as a gentleman of perturbed mien hurriedly enters the room and leads him to one side.

To the waiter he remarks: "I am the manager of the Theatre Cluny. I have many free tickets."

"Aha!" cried the *garçon* joyously.

"One word, Alphonse; I wish to inquire if a young American girl—very poor," continues Rousette, putting his hand into his pocket and about to produce a letter.

"Never mind the letter," says Alphonse. "I'll give you this signal—three taps on the back."

Perhaps the waiter's jovial manner might make Rousette suspicious, but from the dining-room is heard a laughing yet precise Gallic voice: "Paul, where are you, my dear boy?"

"*Mon Dieu*," shudders the theatre manager, "that's the man who insists upon reading a play to me."

"*Diable*, if Ambigue insists on reading a play to you, it is read to you," grins Alphonse.

This prediction doesn't seem to please the gentleman of the theatre, who says rapidly: "I must be going. Notify me on my return if the young lady has arrived. I must hurry to the Boulevard Saint Germain. It is now time to count up my house," and darts out of the front door scarce waiting to put on his overcoat, though the late autumn night is now tempestuous and cold, there being a little snow in the air.

As the street door closes on Rousette, issuing from the dining-room and striding along the main corridor is Literature in pursuit. Ambigue, the dramatist of the future, has at last obtained an interview with a Parisian manager and is determined to make the most of it.

Appearances indicate he needs a producer for his plays; though the young man is recklessly buoyant and insouciant, his extremely neat clothes are decidedly seedy. His tight-fitting, brass-buttoned, swallow-tail coat is suspiciously brilliant at elbows and collar and his black trousers, that look as if his sturdy legs had been melted and moulded into them, shine lustreously at the knees. After the manner of the time they are strapped tightly over lacquered boots, whose dilapidated appearance supports Alphonse's description of the young dramatist's toilet artifices.

His dark eyes sparkle with the brilliancy of champagne, he brushes his short black hair from off his high forehead, darts in pursuit of Rousette along the hallway, and would probably overtake him were he not confronted by his landlady, who steps out of her reception-room for the purpose. Her vindictive glance almost frightens him, for Madame Perriqué, seeing four months' unpaid board bills before her, is

by no means a reassuring sight as she shrugs her scrawny shoulders that issue from her evening dress *de riguer* and projecting a skinny arm, remarks: "One word with *you!*"

"Not apparently a pleasant one," grins the seedy but dashing Moliere as with dapper steps he follows his landlady into the vacant reception-room.

Here, closing the door behind them, Susanne turns upon him and remarks in menacing tone: "You disgraced my house at dinner to-day."

"Yes," observes Ambigue, his dark eyes growing sad as they inspect his well worn footgear. "I shall soon have to borrow another pair of boots. If I wear these much longer, people will begin to imagine that I am poor."

"You ate for two hours and drank two bottles of wine at dinner to-day," says his landlady uncompromisingly.

"When a man's heart is breaking he must do something to kill time." The Bohemian's remark enrages his hostess.

"And you eat to kill yours," sneers Perriqué. "I wish I had better to offer you."

"I wish you had," replies Moliere, sarcastically.

"You ate enough," mutters the landlady indignantly.

"Yes, thank God, in all my misfortune I have never yet lost my appetite," cries Ambigue rapturously.

At this Perriqué shudders: "You thank God because you're ruining me!" and, wringing her hands, sinks overcome into an armchair.

"It's my way of annihilating defeat, Madame—of showing that I despise fate."

"Ah, you class my dinners with your fate."

"Both to me are equally disgusting," observes the dramatic humorist, and immediately sounds the bell.

Alphonse, who is anxious to see what is going on, now steps in promptly and receives the nonchalant order: "Apropos of dinner, take up to my room a bottle of Cliquot."

"Of course not!" breaks in Suzanne, savagely.

Producing a little paper, Ambigue glances at her significantly, and she stammers: "Well, then, a *pint* bottle."

"A *quart bottle!*" cries Moliere.

"You must be drunk!" ejaculates his landlady.

"No, but I'm going to be!" says the dramatist enthusiastically. "Alphonse, *two* quart bottles."

"Did I hear you say *two*?" stammers the astonished landlady.

"No, you were mistaken," answers Ambigue promptly. "Alphonse, *three* bottles of 'The Widow' to my room instantly."

"Alphonse, you will not!" Madame Perriqué's voice is dictatorial, but the dramatist taps significantly his paper, and she falters: "You will not disobey Monsieur Ambigue."

"*Monsieur Ambigue*—certainly not," and the waiter withdraws; but his chuckle in the hall drives his mistress almost to distraction.

Her mind is not made more placid by Moliere opening the door and commanding jauntily: "A box of cigars also. Rousette of the Theatre Cluny will listen to my new play, and we'll make a night of it."

Returning with a step made airy by the thought of more wine and good cigars, Moliere Shakespeare Ambigue, the dramatist of the future, is confronted by his landlady, who says in a hoarse voice: "You are ruining me, and you leave my house!"

Closing the door carefully behind him, the dashing bohemian seats himself nonchalantly and remarks in low but impressive tone: "I am making your fortune, and I stay here as long as I *diable* please. You forget this paper!" He holds up a little memorandum. Then, his voice becoming sad, pathetic, yet at times passionate, he breaks out upon her: "For four months you lodged me in your garret and let me feed at your table because I played the jester for your guests. Lately there were very few boarders for your

court fool to amuse, and two days ago you come to me and say: 'Ambigue, leave my house and starve in the street!' And I say: 'Without me you starve also. Agree in writing to give me all I wish as long as I keep your house full of boarders, and I crowd your domicile.' You sign the bond, and to-day your house is full. Why should my stomach be empty?"

"You didn't fill my house!" ejaculates Suzanne, unbelievably. "These men's actions are suspicious; sometimes I fear that there is crime or sedition connected with their sudden appearance. Perhaps it is Flourens and his band of Reds."

At this Ambigue breaks into a sneering laugh, rings the bell, and remarks: "There is no crime in the affair but these men's avaricious hearts. I will prove it to you."

As Alphonse, who has been trying to listen at the door, enters hurriedly, the man of letters questions: "How many gentlemen applied for rooms to-day?"

"Twenty-three, Monsieur."

"Each of the twenty-three had a letter that he surreptitiously consulted?"

"All, Monsieur. Their manner was mysterious."

"And each inquired for a young American lady—very poor?"

"Each did, Monsieur."

"You see, Madame Perriqué," observes Ambigue. As the waiter is about to withdraw, he continues affably: "Alphonse, you are a good boy. Take another bottle of 'The Widow' and drink the widow's—" he bows to his landlady—"and my health."

"*Diab!e!*" screams the *garçon*, a sudden idea flashing through him. Returning to them, he bows to the floor and says: "Aha, permit my humble congratulations; you are going to marry Madame."

"Is Alphonse crazy!" screams Madame Perriqué.

"No, but he thinks I am!" jeers Ambigue.

Contrasting Suzanne's scrawny shoulders and fifty-year-old face with the debonair bohemian's flashing eyes and youthful demeanor, this repartee makes the laughing waiter fairly stagger out of the room.

But Madame Perriqué, being a woman of business, puts aside personal consideration, and now asks eagerly: "How did you bring all these men here?"

"It is simple," replies Ambigue. "To myself I said I can move my characters on the stage, why not move people on the stage of life? Therefore I sent thirty duplicates of this letter." He fumbles in his pocket, and selecting an epistle from a variegated pile of literature which chiefly consists of unreceipted bills, smooths out the paper before him, and observes: "It is addressed to Miss Alice Ballard."

"Alice Ballard!" Madame Perriqué gives a start. "One of my former pupils!"

But unheeding her, Ambigue continues: "Thirty duplicates of this I had sent in various adroit ways so that they would fall into the hands of thirty of the most inveterate fortune hunters in Paris. You observe that none but men have entered your portals."

"With the exception of the actress, Armande de Millefleurs, who suddenly engaged the best apartment in my house this afternoon," returns the landlady.

"*Diable!*" mutters the bohemian, with a start. But checking himself, he continues: "My bait has taken, and all I have done for myself is to bring here the manager of the Theatre Cluny, as great a fortune hunter as the rest, so I can read him one of my plays."

"But what is in the letter?" asks Suzanne, nervously.

"I stole it from the first act of one of my comedies," replies the dramatist. "It has been made absolutely realistic, as the yellow fever a year ago devastated the State of Mississippi." With this introduction, he reads the following curious epistle:

MY DEAREST ALICE—I send this to your Parisian address, having just arrived from New York. My last let-

ter from Mississippi informed you that my uncle had returned from Nevada, the land of silver, where he owned a mine of superb richness. Alas, that so wealthy a man should not live. Two months ago the yellow fever, which has ravaged by dear home, took him for its victim. He died leaving me his whole fortune.

My income is so enormous that suitors for my hand and, alas, I fear my money, have been so numerous and so pressing, that I have fled from them to Paris, where, being totally unknown, I may be wooed for myself and not for my fortune.

To test this, I shall appear as a very poor girl, and then when some Adonis of the Boulevard marries me for love, he shall find the heiress is generous to a romantic heart. Inquire for me at Madame Perriqué's, No. 37 Rue de Provence. I shall probably be in a garret.

Yours devotedly,

GERTRUDE ELOISE HAMMOND.

"Gertrude Eloise Hammond!" ejaculates Madame Perriqué. "Another of my former pupils." Then she asks in surprised tone: "Ambigue, where did you get the names Alice Ballard and Gertrude Hammond?"

This is answered by the man of letters opening the door abruptly and commanding Alphonse, who is loitering outside: "Go to my room and bring me the manuscript book you will find upon the table."

Returning to Madame Perriqué, the dramatist bows affably and says shortly: "Through your kindness, I inhabit the garret along with the rats and the rub-

bish. Pursuing one day a rat who had devoured the first act of my tragedy——”

“A rat ate your tragedy—did it kill him?” asks Suzanne, sarcastically.

“No, he enjoyed it. It had been made palatable to the little gourmand by the grease from my candle it was covered with,” grins Ambigue. “Pursuing this rat, I discovered among the rubbish—ah, thank you, Alphonse,” and he takes from the waiter a book which that servitor brings him. Then, carefully closing the door upon the lingering *garçon*, the dramatist taps a well-thumbed manuscript volume bound in parchment, and queries: “You recognize it?”

“It looks familiar,” murmurs Madame Perriqué.

“It is the roll and punishment book of a young ladies’ boarding school.”

“My school! My book!” says Suzanne, sharply.

“From it I obtained the names for the letter; also many of the names of various female characters for my dramas.”

“And you have dared to put my pupils into your vile plays!” remarks the ex-schoolmistress, severely; adding reflectively: “That book must have been packed up in one of my boxes when I moved my school, two years ago.”

“Two years ago——” Ambigue rises abruptly

and mutters gloomily: "That was the unhappy time I was robbed by a cruel schoolmistress of the girl I adored with a passion that turned the clod into a flame."

"For Heaven's sake," giggles Suzanne, "don't again commence that old tale of the brown-eyed chit who flirted with your susceptible heart from the window of her pension. If I had had charge of her, she would have caught it."

"No, doubt, you would have been cruel," retorts the bohemian, moodily, "as severe as her accursed schoolmistress, whom I hate, and could I find—but the brain fever robbed me of revenge. This book shows it."

"Sir!" exclaims Madame Perriqué, indignantly.

But, unheeding her, he looks over the pages in a dreamy, morose way, and selects a few unpleasant items. "September 10th, 1865, Alice Ballard, England, fifty lines for chewing gum. Georgina Fortescue, for co-responding—I mean corresponding—twenty-four hours' retirement in her room. September 11th, Gertrude Eloise Hammond, Mississippi, America, five hundred lines for flirting from window with Frenchman. September 14th, bread and water for a day, same offense. Poor thing," he half laughs. "Well, you see where I discovered the names of your

pupils for my letter, Alice Ballard and Gertrude Eloise Hammond, of Mississippi."

"And a pretty predicament you've placed me in," answers the ex-instructress, savagely. "Gertrude Hammond is now in America. Her father was some kind of an agent for the sale of Confederate bonds in Paris. During the great Civil War in the United States he brought her to me, her mother being dead, and left her with enough money for her school bills. Without her, these fortune hunters will leave my house."

"Some will stay a week, others a month, others till their money is expended, hoping to meet the American heiress, then other letters will be sent," answers Ambigue, confidently.

"But we shall be prosecuted for fraud," stammers the lady.

"Oho," jeers the bohemian, "the police will never hear; victims of such practical jokes are *very* silent. Madame Perriqué, some day, when your purse is full, go to Monsieur Felix and order a dress for Miss Gertrude Hammond, of Mississippi, who has done so much for you."

"I shall do no such thing. The brown-eyed minx gave me too much trouble."

"Brown-eyed like my lost angel!" Ambigue's face grows very gloomy.

"Look at that book and tell me if I should forgive her," cries Suzanne, and reads: "October 18th, Gertrude Hammond, sent home to her father for flirting with Frenchman."

As Madame Perriqué mentions the date a wave of agony flies through the ardent bohemian. He clenches his hands, and sighs: "It was on the 18th of October, 1865, that I loved and lost."

"Yes; I had terrible trouble with her. She seemed infatuated with the wretch," continues Madame Perriqué. "Her adorer was a romantic creature who wrote for the Parisian newspapers, and every morning threw violets into Gertrude's window addressed Mignonette."

"*Mignonette!*" This is a gasp of horror.

Alphonse, listening outside the door, can even hear it.

But Madame Perriqué, looking over the pages of the book, unfortunately doesn't notice it, and runs on to her doom: "A note being found in her room signed 'Gaspard.'"

"*Gaspard!*" Ambigue's agitation is terrible. He shudders: "My note! My nom de plume!"

"So, as the war in America was over," continues Suzanne, "I sent Miss Gerty back to the States with a letter from No. 32 Rue du Rocher."

"No. 32 Rue du Rocher—the *place*!"

"The chit's admirer," Perriqué carelessly goes on, "some beggarly ink slinger, was so affected that his love changed to brain fever, and before he recovered I had moved my school from 32 Rue du Rocher to 48 Rue de Milan, and so escaped all further trouble from the romantic Frenchman."

"But the name on the door plate of 32 Rue du Rocher was Perkins," stammers Ambigue, trembling and dazed.

"Precisely. Perkins is my real name. Didn't you know when I entered the hotel business I made it French and fashionable and called myself Perriqué—my God, what's the matter with you?" For the appearance of Moliere Shakespeare Ambigue as he stands before her is simply horrifying.

"Perkins! Perriqué!" he breaks out at the unfortunate schoolmistress. "At last the chain is forged. Wretch! behold the man you have fled from so long! Behold the creature who threw the violets! Behold the Gaspard of the note!"

"But your name is Ambigue!"

"Ambigue is my *dramatic* name!"

"Good heavens!" Madame Perriqué starts up, alarmed, and whispers: "You're the bohemian?"

"That you robbed of his love! Ah! Gertrude—

Gertrude," he moans, "whose name I never knew until these cruel pages—" he tosses the book on the floor—"gave up their hideous secret. To me you were always Mignonette, and I to you Gaspard." Then, turning on the astounded Perriqué, he demands: "Monster, where is your victim now?"

"In Mississippi. A year ago I heard of her father's death in Havana by yellow fever."

"Then she is doubtless dead also!" Like an avenging Nemesis, he hisses in the landlady's ear: "Child torturer!"

"Spare me!"

"Child torturer, who filled my dead love's exquisite eyes with pearly tears; who forced her exquisite mouth to swallow hard water and her ivory teeth to masticate stale bread, because your victim had the heart to love the poor bohemian." The last is a wailing sob.

"It was my duty. You should have starved together," asserts the schoolmistress, defiantly.

"She would have been happier starving in a garret with me than reveling in her luxurious ancestral halls in Mississippi!"

"Ancestral halls!" jeers Madame Perriqué. "And what have you done? By your forged letters you have made the name of the girl you love the idol of the fortune hunters of Paris."

"By it I shall both punish myself and avenge her!" observes Ambigue in icy, unrelenting voice. He rings the bell. "From to-night Madame Perriqué's boarding house ceases to exist. I shall denounce you to your guests!"

"Think—if you ruin me you ruin yourself!" implores the landlady.

But, unheeding her, Ambigue addresses Alphonse, who has come hastily in, saying: "Are any of Madame's guests in the house?"

"Yes; some in the reception-room, trying to find out something of the child who plays the piano so horribly," grins the waiter.

"Request them to step here."

The *garçon* passes out of the door.

To the shivering ex-schoolmistress the bohemian whispers: "After that he will go out and get a couple of gendarmes."

"Gendarmes! For what?" shrieks Perriqué.

"To arrest you and me, of course!"

"*Mon Dieu*, you're crazy!" moans the landlady.

"Crazy!" he jeers, vindictively. "You will be crazy when I tell these people the fools they have been made, and the Tribunale of Police Correctionale has Suzanne Perriqué, *hotesse*, and Moliere Shakespeare Ambigue, dramatist, before it, charged with con-

spiracy to entice people into her boarding house for the purpose of extorting money. Ah, then it will be bread and water for me and for you!"

"For God's sake have mercy on a widow!" she pleads, frantically.

"Were you maid, wife or widow all in one, I'd sacrifice you," he snarls, savagely.

Requested by Alphonse, the guests are approaching the reception-room. The Turk and the Greek are already at the door.

"Messieurs," observes Ambigue in cold, implacable voice, a mocking sneer upon his mobile face as he glances morosely at Perriqué, who has sunk overcome into a chair. "You no doubt think yourselves very wise, but I have a hideous joke to tell you that will make you think yourselves the greatest dolts on earth."

But the gentlemen lodgers now pay little attention to him.

A timid, faltering ring has been heard at the street door. Alphonse is gliding about the clustering guests, whose faces are turned inquiringly upon the jeering Ambigue, and giving each of them three taps upon the back.

With that, none of them have eyes except on the hallway, along which is approaching a young girl,

scarce over twenty, her beautiful face exceedingly pale, her steps weak and trembling. At the door of the reception-room she pauses as if to nerve herself for an ordeal as her shivering hands try to brush the snow from the well-worn, almost dilapidated, garments that drape her graceful figure.

During this, Alphonse, skipping in before her, announces impressively: "Mademoiselle Gertrude Hammond."

At the waiter's words each man in the reception-room assumes a deferential attitude save the bohemian, who seizes Madame Perriqué by her scrawny arm and hisses in her ear: "A plot of yours! Some disguised ballet girl. You dare to give to a *figurante* the name of my dead love!" Then he breaks out, warningly: "Gentlemen, this is all a ruse! Mademoiselle Gertrude Hammond is no——" But the words die upon his lips as he sees the pale face and beautiful brown eyes of his lost love coming into the apartment.

To her the Turk salaams; before her the Greek bows and the Count de Pichoir assumes his most effective boulevard attitude.

There is a flurry of whisking skirts, and Georgina, flying across the hallway, screams: "Oh, Gertie, my old school chum!"

Upon all this Ambigue gazes in a dazed way, muttering to himself: "*Mon Dieu*, my lost love! Mignonette, the dream of my imagination!" Of a sudden, passing his hands through his short hair, he mentally gasps: "Ah, she died of yellow fever—a ghost—a spirit! I'll bite her and see!"

His divinity is standing like a statue; her face, made pallid by suffering, seems almost ethereal; one delicate hand is outstretched, appealing to Madame Perriqué; Ambigue gives her little finger a slight nip with his white teeth.

Astounded by this strange greeting, the young lady utters a plaintive shriek, which is responded to by a joyous whisper: "It screams! It lives! *Mon Dieu!* Thank God, it lives!"

There is a groan of rage from the assembled gentlemen; but this salute seems to have brought renewed vitality into the faltering maiden. She says, pleadingly, her voice trembling: "My old teacher, I—I returned to Paris a year ago to study music. You will not refuse a home to a poor girl who has been orphaned by the yellow fever."

At this Madame Perriqué's gentlemen guests look very wise, and a few consult surreptitiously their letters.

"She has never seen my forgeries," muses the bohemian. "*Diable*, fact goes beyond fiction!"

But the girl, addressing herself only to Madame Perriqué, continues in a low, trembling voice: "After the death of my parents the local bank failed. I received no remittances from Mississippi. I was alone, helpless, in Paris without money."

An expression of sympathetic horror arises from every boulevardier.

"I struggled for existence, but almost in vain," continues the sweet voice. "Then I sought you, but you had changed your name. Only this evening—I discovered it. Mrs. Perkins—Madame Perriqué—you will not refuse a home to a poor girl who has none."

"*Diable*, a consummate actress," reflects admiringly Rousette, who has just returned from his theatre.

"Of course she will!" ejaculates Georgina.

But Madame Perriqué, suddenly thinking, "Here is the bait that will keep my house full," has already opened wide her skinny arms, and cried, "My poor darling Gertie; of course I will."

Stepping toward her, the girl murmurs, "I—I'm quite weak. I have not had anything to eat for——" and would sink fainting upon the floor; but Georgina catches her in her quick arms, and kneeling down herself, holds her in them.

Then every one is flying about; some have called

for wine and others for food; Henri has produced a jeweled smelling-bottle, Alphonse is bringing in a decanter of brandy; every worshiper of Mammon is trying to succor a goddess whom he believes rich.

"Hungry! My God!" Ambigue seizes the brandy from Alphonse, and shoving the Turk and the Greek aside, murmurs: "Drink, sweet one, drink!" Opening the pallid lips, he pours the invigorating fluid down his darling's throat.

Looking upon him, recognition comes into his lost love's eyes; she murmurs faintly: "Gaspard."

"*Mon ange!* My divinity, Mignonette!" murmurs Ambigue, in romantic rapture.

But here Georgina, gazing at him, unfortunately giggles: "The funny Frenchman you used to laugh at, Gertie!"

His rivals all burst into merriment.

"The funny Frenchman she used to laugh at!" shudders Ambigue, and slinks away like a beaten cur through the crowd of admiring devotees his forged letters have produced for the maiden of his heart.

While others are reviving his half-swooning lost love, while Suzanne and Georgina are feeding her with sandwiches, and Alphonse is opening champagne for her sweet lips, and the Count and the theatre manager are respectfully fanning her, Moliere Shake-

speare Ambigue smites his hands together and paces the deserted hallway of Madame Perriqué's house, muttering with anguished lips: "Despair! 'Twas laughter, not love, that Mignonette gave to Gaspard's devotion!"

CHAPTER III.

THE NEW ORLEANS LAWYER.

It was some three weeks afterwards in the morning. Madame Perriqué's house being crowded, a few additional fortune hunters having drifted into her domicile, she had placed the two young ladies under her charge in the same little bedroom.

Georgina, after one or two slight yawns, opens her blue eyes, looks about as if half expecting a loved face and murmurs in only partially awakened reverie: "Jack!" Then suddenly tears dim the bride's longing eyes; she gives a little frantic gasp of dismay and mutters: "Oh, my gracious, I forgot; Jack's still in Cannes. Jack's got the measles!"

Though a telegram had arrived two days after her bridegroom's departure, bringing the blessed news of his safe arrival at the Mediterranean watering place in which his aunt was stopping, after that there had come an awful letter stating that he had the measles and wouldn't return until all danger of contagion was over. Reflecting upon this his deserted bride

whimpers: "As if I cared for the measles. I'd kiss Jack if he had the smallpox. Oh, it's awful to be left alone here with that horrid, dominant Perriqué, who treats me just as if I had never left her rule in the Rue du Rocher. If Jack doesn't come soon, she'll be writing to my uncle for my week's board bill. Then everything will come out before Jack's reconciled his aunt to our marriage.

Fortunately youth is seldom unhappy long. As Georgina throws her white arms pathetically over her head, she chances to turn upon her pillow, and glancing across a short space that divides her cot from another little bed, suddenly reflects: "Oh, I'm a wretch to make a fuss when my fate is so much happier than poor Gertie's. Fancy her alone and starving in Paris before she discovered that Mrs. Perkins had changed her name to Madame Perriqué. However, she is looking much better now."

The roses of youth have returned to the cheeks temporarily made pallid by anxiety and want, and Miss Hammond's pretty head surrounded by masses of long, luxuriant curling brown hair, seems contented enough. She sleeps quite peacefully this morning as the bright winter sun illuminates the little chamber, which has become her resting place. For the avaricious Perriqué has astutely concluded that Miss

Gertrude Hammond's presence in the house is necessary for her financial salvation. She has determined to let the crowd of fortune hunters pursue the young lady as long as they will pay her exorbitant bills. It is her one hope of keeping her big mansion in the Rue de Provence full until the expiration of her crushing lease. She has reflected contentedly: "Why should I care for the disappointment of these wretches induced by Ambigue's ruse to crowd my pension?" Her only compunction in the matter is a latent fear that the trick may be discovered and some of the dupes may make an outcry that will produce an investigation before the Tribunale of Police Correctionelle.

But the three weeks have run along without danger to her. Gertrude has recovered her youthful health with sufficient rapidity to cause her numerous suitors to believe that her faintness from want had been a very well planned dramatic exhibition to emphasize her poverty. In fact, Rousette, the manager of the Theatre Cluny, as he sat near her at breakfast in the dining room, noticing the quickly returning roses to Miss Hammond's cheeks, had smiled to himself: "*Par Dieu*, this heiress made a pathetic entry that would have bothered even the great De Millefleurs, my leading lady, to equal behind the

footlights. When I marry her I may put my sweet Gertrude upon the boards, notwithstanding her grand fortune. If she acts as well on the stage as she does in real life, she'll make a hit that will keep that avaricious Armande from being too exacting as to salary."

Therefore, the manager's attentions to the putative heiress had been exceedingly marked; likewise those of all the other gentlemen in the house. They had snarled and quarreled over their pretty prey until she wondered what hidden charm she possessed that fascinated these men, who scarce glanced at Georgina, in her childish costume, and gave but little attention even to the superb charms of Armande de Millefleurs, the celebrated actress, who occupied the best apartment in the house.

After a yawn young Mrs. Horton springs out of her little bed. She is very anxious to receive a letter from her putative brother stating that he has recovered from the measles and will be with her in Paris. For this, each morning she had sneaked down ahead of Madame Perriqué to the dining-room to put her hand on the epistle before her ex-school-mistress could get a chance to inspect it.

Actuated with this idea, Georgina rapidly, though with several savage pouts, proceeds to make the

simple toilette of a schoolgirl, to which Suzanne's régime compels her.

She is interrupted in this by Miss Hammond awakening, gazing at her with sleepy eyes and saying half dreamily: "Ah, Georgina, you there, child?"

"Gertie, you make me so angry when you call me *child!*" cries the youthful matron, petulantly, stamping a little stockinged foot.

"Well, you look like one," yawns Gertrude. "Come here, dear, and give me a good morning kiss."

And Georgina, running to her and putting her slight arm around her neck, Miss Hammond after a very cordial salute remarks: "You're a wonder. You haven't grown a day older since I left school. In fact, you look younger; only one pig-tail now—you used to have two." She pats the big luxuriant braid into which young Mrs. Horton has just gathered her tresses.

"So did you. I can remember how you loathed them. You feared Gaspard would think you so young," laughs Georgina. "But I wouldn't mind Madame Perriqué making me braid my hair in pig-tail and forcing me to wear this horrid fourteen-year-old frock if only Jack would come back."

"Oh, yes, your brother who has the measles." Miss Hammond is sitting up in bed and stretching a pair of delicately rounded arms, white as snow.

This nonchalant remark about her adored Jack makes young Mrs. Horton rather peevish; she says, in almost childish sulkiness: "I am sorry I cannot return your compliment. You have grown, Gertrude, *exceedingly* mature."

"Adversity!" sighs the young American lady.

"Adversity! when every man in the house is making love to you like blazes—when the Count de Pichoir declares he only lives in your presence—when the German baron sighs: '*Das Lichte meiner Seele*,' every time you pass him by."

"Oh, don't speak of those persistent men!" shudders Gertrude, slipping from the bed.

"Yes, you had better get up or Perriqué will be after you!" giggles Georgina. "Bread and water, eh, a la the Rue du Rocher, when the amative Gaspard used to throw in notes to Mignonette."

This mention of her former admirer makes Miss Hammond's delicate lips tremble. After a moment, controlling herself, she says, affecting lightness: "Oh, Madame Perriqué won't be very stern to me. You know she has been exceedingly kind to me lately, even giving me this pretty dress," she points to an inexpensive yet becoming toilette, "and yesterday—" The young lady pauses here and bites her lips; then asks suddenly, "Can you keep a secret, Georgie?"

"Can I keep a secret!" cries young Mrs. Morton. "Wheugh! I should think I could! A big one!"

"Well, yesterday, with my consent, Madame Perriqué adopted me under the French law," says Miss Hammond impressively. "She has promised to let me study music again so that I can learn to support myself."

"Jingo, made herself your mother! Cracky, you'll have to toe the mark now. What did you let her do that for?" asks Georgina in astounded suspicion.

"What did it matter?" sighs Gertrude. "I have no relatives in the world."

"No relatives in the world!" The adolescent matron's eyes rest sympathetically on the beautiful girl.

"None except an uncle in California, and he never answered my letters when I wrote telling him I was alone in Paris without friends, without money, almost starving," whispers Miss Hammond pathetically. "Oh, Georgina, may you never suffer the miseries that I have. After Madame Perriqué sent me back to my father in Mississippi, we were very poor. The awful war between the South and the North had just ended. The liberated negroes would not work our devastated plantation; so my poor papa, who had grown aged with the anxieties of the great combat, permitted me to return here. I believed I could suc-

ceed in getting not only instruction but opportunity to exercise my vocal gifts in Paris. Then—then came the awful news of his death by yellow fever and also of all my near relatives except the uncle in California. They had died in a little place near Granada that was devastated by the scourge.” The girl smites her hands distractedly together. “Immediately after followed the failure of the local bank in which was deposited a few hundred dollars, all that was left me. I—I was alone without money in this vast city. I wrote to my uncle in California, but received no answer. Life became simply a struggle for existence, until I found Madame Perriqué that evening and she gave me a home. For this I believed she deserves at least the gratitude of obedience from me? Consequently, when she suggested that I become her—her daughter by adoption, I acceded to it. I believe my old school mistress intends to announce it to-day. Of this I am glad, for then these gentlemen who pursue me so persistently will be compelled to make their overtures to Madame Perriqué, not to me. You know, under the French law, I shall not be my own mistress until I am twenty-five.”

“Well, you can be sure there is something in this adoption beyond the ordinary,” remarks Georgina, proceeding with her toilette. “Perriqué was never particularly kind to anyone in the world before.”

"Why, she even fondles and caresses me now," observes Gertrude, who has begun to drape her graceful figure with a plain but becoming morning gown.

"Jingo, she was rather strict with you when we were at school, if I remember rightly," jeers the younger lady, as she sulkily puts on her juvenile frock.

"Yes," answers Miss Hammond, "but she has changed to me. I am better off than you, my pretty Georgina," she smiles; then queries, a roguish look in her eyes: "Why were you not at dinner last night?"

"Oh, don't mention it," whispers Georgina savagely. Suzanne accused me of flirting with that German baron, who won't even look at me. As if a man would flirt with a chit like me." She glances at the short skirts she has just donned. "A boy in knickerbockers around the corner in the Boulevard Haussman wanted to roll a hoop with me. That's the nearest to masculine attentions I've had." Young Mrs. Horton's eyes fill with tears. "If Perriqué hadn't taken all my money for board, I'd—I'd run away," she whimpers. "Sent to bed like an infant!" She stamps both of her high-heeled tasseled bottines savagely on the floor; then falters nervously. "I would have resisted, but if she told Jack that I'd been flirting with that German, perhaps—perhaps he'd be jealous."

"Jack?"

"Yes, my Jack, my brother!"

"Who ever heard of a brother being jealous?" scoffs Miss Hammond airily as she arranges her *chignon*.

"But I've—I've got a very peculiar brother," stammers Georgina. Then anxious to avoid discussion on this delicate subject the unfortunate bride suddenly says: "Get your things on quick, Gertie. I'll just run down and see if there's a letter from Jack in the dining-room for me. Perriqué won't be up for three-quarters of an hour—let's go off for a walk in the Parc Monceaux. It'll do you good. There will be none of your masculine admirers about to pester you at this time in the morning."

"Very well," replies Gertrude, "I don't think Madame Perriqué will object if we go together."

Thereupon Georgina speeds downstairs on her errand, leaving the elder girl to complete her toilette and think meditatively of her new and curious relationship to her old school-mistress. Miss Hammond is not suspicious about the matter. Having experienced the helplessness of isolation in this great city, the thought of Madame Perriqué's taking an interest in her has been a very pleasant one to the poor girl. There was none of her compatriots from

whom she could possibly expect aid. At that time the American colony in Paris was but a suggestion of the crowd of visitors from the United States that now throng the boulevards of the French Capital, though some of them had already impressed shopkeepers with such prodigality that Americans were generally considered extremely rich. The few, however, who came from the Southern States, after the losses and devastation of the great civil war, were scarce able to take care of themselves and in no position to aid others.

Impressed with her lonely and unprotected situation, Miss Hammond, the previous day, as they returned from the notary's after signing the documents of her adoption, had snuggled up to her old tutoress in the cab and whispered: "Dear Madame Perriqué, for your kindness to me you shall always have my obedience."

"Thank you, my dear Gertie," had answered her new mother triumphantly, feeling certain that she could now retain the young lady who was filling her house with gentlemen boarders. Though her charge had been extremely high strung and vivacious until misfortune had tempered her high spirits, Madame Perriqué has a good deal of confidence in her new daughter's innate virtue, purity of mind as well as

nobility of disposition. In fact, she had not sent Miss Hammond back to America for any fear the girl would make a *faux pas*, but rather because her father's remittances had grown uncertain, the close of the disastrous war having left nearly everybody in the Southern States financially exhausted.

"If any gentlemen approach you as regards marriage," Perriqué had remarked to the young lady now so thoroughly under her rule, "you must, of course, refer them to me. By the bye, that Ambigue who was the Gaspard you used to flirt with when you were a wild young thing in the Rue du Rocher——"

"Yes, Madame Perriqué," had faltered the girl, blushing to the roots of her hair.

"In case he should address you again, you must immediately inform me," commanded the landlady who feared in some moment of remorse the Bohemian would reveal to the young lady the peculiar light in which his forgeries have caused her to be regarded by the crowd of suitors about her.

"That will not be necessary, dear guardian," Gertrude had whispered. "Monsieur Ambigue, since I came to your house, seems to have forgotten me." Though Miss Hammond's words had been haughty, her lips had trembled. A few moments after to Madame Perriqué's concern and astonishment, the young

lady's pretty head had drooped pathetically upon her guardian's shoulder and her eyes had filled with tears.

Having from long experience a pretty good knowledge of feminine emotions, the ex-schoolmistress had said sternly: "No nonsense, Gertrude, about this Ambigue!"

"Certainly not!" had answered Miss Hammond resolutely. "I have too much pride, dear Suzanne, to think of a man who scarcely even speaks to me." Her eyes had grown bright, her nostrils had become dilated and her fair head was now very erect.

Perhaps it is Gaspard's coldness that makes Mignonette indifferent as to Madame Perriqué's assuming the control of her young life. Even this morning, Gertrude mutters haughtily: "What do I care!" as she finishes her simple toilette.

A few minutes after, Miss Hammond in inexpensive walking dress looped up over a neat balmoral petticoat, steps out of her bedroom and trips down the stairs into the hallway, where she is joined by young Mrs. Horton, who mutters pathetically: "No letter, no letter *yet!*" then suddenly says: "Hurry along, Gloomy's in the dining-room and coming up after me."

"Oh, don't call him that!" whispers Gertie reproachfully as she sees the white, high forehead fol-

lowed by the dark, pathetic eyes of Ambigue, the bohemian, rising up from the stairway.

"Come on quick or Ghosty will catch us," whispers Georgina, plucking her sleeve.

But Gertrude, remembering the laughing face and buoyant mein of the jaunty Gaspard, as with hope in his eyes and confidence in his bearing he pursued her when she was a flirtatious minx on the Rue du Rocher, gazes wistfully at the gaunt Ambigue whose eyes gleam in his head like calcium lights, and whose appearance has grown morbidly melancholy during the last three weeks.

With improving health and spirits Miss Hammond would have turned from the exaggerated compliments and attempted interviews of the crowd of boulevardiers to one for whose words she cares and whose many acts of guarded politeness to her during this time have recalled the piquant delights of her youthful flirtation in the Rue du Rocher, when he was Gaspard and she Mignonette; but smitten by Georgina's careless words the bohemian has kept proudly aloof from her.

Gazing at the crowd of adorers around his lost love, Ambigue has stalked the salon and hallways of Madame Perriqué's house like an animated statue of morose philosophy. Though once he had sneered to

Gertrude: "You are very popular, but when the gilding wears off, Mademoiselle."

The girl had been too miserable to reply, except by a haughty glance, though her sweet lips had whimpered. She had not forgotten the bright eyes of Gaspard sparkling with hope and love as he threw bouquets into her schoolgirl window.

And all the time in the heart of the sneering scribbler was a horrible remorse. "Even though she has mocked my love, she is worthy of a better fate than I have given her, the idol of these wretches who have gilded her supreme beauty with gold and would not worship it without," he has sighed.

Despite plain calico gowns, Miss Hammond with returning roses on her cheeks has become more than lovely. The proud spirit that had been crushed has begun to sparkle in her brown eyes that used to make Gaspard's heart beat as she looked from her little window in the Rue du Rocher, where she was shut up and endured bread and water at the hands of the stern Perriqué because of his surreptitious notes and ardent attentions.

Thinking of this, Ambigue had been tempted many times in vindictive vengeance to disclose Perriqué's secret to her dupes, but the reflection: "How my lost love will despise me when she knows," had closed his lips with a shudder.

To divorce himself from this self-torture, Ambigue had in vain attempted to induce Rousette to read one of his plays, but the manager had put him off from time to time, saying he had other business on hand. Finally, one day at breakfast, in return to repeated solicitation, the theatrical manager had remarked abruptly to Moliere: "My dear fellow, what is the use of reading your manuscript now? I have just contracted with the Dramatic Authors' Society for the production of a play that I found three days ago smuggled into my laundered shirts. I like originality in authors. I read it. It is immensely novel. I have great hopes it will be popular."

"The title?" had whispered Ambigue in trembling voice.

"Oh, I don't mind mentioning it now, as I've just signed the contract with the Dramatists' Society, though their secretary has written me that the author of the play, who has registered it with them, desires that his name shall be kept secret until after the production. You will see the piece advertised to-morrow, and its 'first night' announced very shortly."

"Its title?" queries the bohemian, a curious glance in his eyes.

"*'The Fortunes of Calypso.'* De Millefleurs declares she's going to make the great hit of her life

in it, but De Millefleurs always thinks she's going to make a hit in every part," had laughed the manager, who, engrossed by his forthcoming production, didn't notice that Ambigue's step, as he left the breakfast table, seemed balloon-like in its lightness. Rousette was not aware either that when the young author went up to his garret and drove the rats out of it, he sank down into a chair and murmured: "At last! Thank God, at last!" and burst into a flood of curious tears.

This had occurred two weeks before. This evening is the night of production. "The Passions of Calypso" has been placarded for the last ten days on the advertising columns about the boulevards, and seats are being reserved at the *bureau de location* and the *offices du theatres* for its first production. This very morning, Alphonse has handed Monsieur Ambigue a large documentary looking letter. Opening it, he has read:

DEAR SIR:

According to your request, we have carefully withheld the authorship of "The Passions of Calypso," drama in four acts, but will announce your name at its first performance this evening at the Theatre Cluny. I enclose the usual author's box and first night tickets.

Yours respectfully,

JEAN DE BRISSAC,

Assistant Secretary of the Society of Dramatic Authors.

Taking the usual ten tickets from the envelope, Ambigue had looked at them exultingly and muttered to himself: "At last, the dream is real. *Ciel*, how my pulse throbs when I think of this evening. To-night I shall see the creatures of my imagination live. Should 'Calypso' succeed, then I can say: 'Mignonette, the pauper you laugh at, is a successful dramatist who offers you his hand.' And yet she doesn't always laugh!"

A wild hope rises in his heart. "Sometimes I have seen—what was it?—love or pity upon her fair face. Should it be passion, how quick will I snatch my goddess from this horde of fortune-hunters whom my accursed artifice has conjured up to make me cringe with shame as they pursue her poverty, thinking she is Danaë of the Golden Shower."

It is this hope that makes his deep-set eyes gleam like stars as, stepping up the stairway, the bohemian catches sight of the object of his devotion, who is about to flit through the front door. He would address her, but the young lady, remembering her guardian's words of warning, steps hurriedly into the street following Georgina.

Trying to put Gaspard out of her mind, Miss Ger-tie soon trips into the Boulevard Haussman. Braced by the vigorous winter air, she is laughing vivacious-

ly at the piquant pouts of young Mrs. Horton, who has been again approached by the boy around the corner offering to play hoop with her.

At this early hour of the morning there are more nurse girls with their charges on the streets than any one else, so the young ladies are not annoyed by the glances that are apt to follow unprotected female loveliness about Parisian streets.

By the way of the only partially built-up Boulevard Malesherbes, they soon reach the pretty Parc Monceaux, where the two loiter about its ruined colonnade and wander by the shores of its little lake during a very pleasant quarter of an hour.

But as they turn away from the waters of the pretty *Naumachie* to leave the garden, Gertrude suddenly clutches her companion's arm and abruptly hurries her along, saying: "Quick, quick!" a frightened intensity in her voice. Coming out into the Rue de Monceaux, she says, frantically: "Georgie, haven't you a couple of francs in your pocket? Let's drive home in a cab."

"I spent my last franc for bonbons two days ago," answers the juvenile matron. "What's the matter with you, anyway?"

"That man!"

"What man?"

"I can't stop to tell you about him—come!" and Miss Hammond hurries along, taking the quieter streets.

So the two girls almost run down the Rue du Rocher, past their old school, and darting by the big railroad station on the Rue St. Lazare, soon find themselves at the entrance of Madame Perriqué's house. They sound the bell. This not being answered immediately, Gertrude, after a few nervous ejaculations, such as: "Oh, why doesn't Alphonse come? That man will find me! Georgie, see if he's coming round the corner. Alphonse, hurry—hurry!" rings again frantically.

Whereupon Alphonse, languidly opening the portal, remarks: "*Diable*, by your persistency I thought you were a gendarme."

But paying no attention to the waiter's criticism, Gertrude dashes up the stairs followed by Georgina. In her room, she shudders: "Too late! Too late! He came around the corner as we entered. I know he saw me enter the house."

"Are you married to that man?" excitedly queries Georgina, who thinks all girls' secrets must be like hers.

"No, but he wants me to," answers Miss Hammond, nervously.

"That's terrific. He must be thundering bad," giggles the other sarcastically. Then she demands excitedly: "What has the wretch done?"

"That I hardly know myself," answers Gertrude, reflectively. "Though he professed the deepest sympathy with me——" Miss Hammond's eyes grow pathetic, "misfortune always seemed to come to me associated with him, even to the loss of my very bread when I was alone, struggling for existence in this city that is so great it is careless of individual misery. I had obtained a situation in a large dry-goods store in the Rue de Rivoli. He appeared at the counter, made a few purchases—I lost it. I was engaged in a little shop in which they manufactured artificial flowers. He strolled in, bought a few of them—my work was shortly declared unsatisfactory. Then almost compelled by hunger, I threw away my pride and became a nurse, and took care of a little child. As I rolled the baby carriage along the Champs Elysées, he saw me and walked with me, protesting his sorrow at my misfortunes—that very evening the lady who employed me told me I was nurse no more. And all the time he was offering to marry me, respectfully, guardedly. He was promising to place me above want, even in luxury; but I—I couldn't," she shivers. "He offered me money, but it was impos-

sible to place myself under an obligation to a man I innately suspected and dreaded. I—I would rather starve.”

“But he doesn’t seem to be such an awful ruffian anyway,” laughs Georgina, “offering to lend you money, wishing to marry you. Tell me the villain’s name,” she jeers.

“His name is Daniel Webster Rosenbaum,” answers Miss Hammond, simply. “He became acquainted with me by living in the same lodging-house in the Quartier Maubert, a curious place for a man of his means. He—he told me he was acquainted with my uncle in California. He is, I believe, a lawyer from New Orleans, traveling in Europe on some business, I don’t know what—but I’m afraid of him. Misfortune seems always to come with his presence. I am sure if he enters this house some mysterious mishap will descend upon me,” she sighs, “and I—I can’t bear any more.”

“Pooh, don’t let Rosenbaum affect your spirits, dear Gertie,” whispers Georgina, “and don’t look so distressed.” For at this moment there rises faintly to their ears the ring of the front door bell. “I’ll run downstairs and see if Rosey followed us,” volunteers the agile young lady. “Together we’ll annihilate the wooer who is pursuing you. For that matter, he is

no worse than every man in the house—except Ambigue. Oh, why are you so popular? Even Armande de Millefleurs, that great artiste, can't get a glance out of 'em when you're about. Keep cool and don't be flustered!"

With this Georgina rushes down the front stairs anxious to aid her pretty friend, but in Madame Perriqué's reception room encounters a gentleman whose presence brings to her even greater consternation than it had produced upon the nervous Miss Hammond.

As the juvenile matron, taking advantage of her short skirts, comes strolling into the apartment in an aimless, child-like way, Alphonse is bowing before a dapper little man of about thirty-five years of age, who is dressed in the extreme of the prevailing fashion, and wears startling jewelry adorned by California quartz and made brilliant by diamonds. His light hair is rather scant upon the front of his head, permitting glimpses of a shiny and brilliant skull. His straggling moustache is shorter in some places than others from his peculiar habit of gnawing it in moments of reflection. His patent leather boots are as brilliant as his eyes, which are those of an astute tiger cat, though these are softened by glasses. His linen 'is immaculate; his bearing is active, yet pre-

cise; his words are cleancut, his manner of speech fluent; his step gliding.

Alphonse is trying to conceal a smile as he says: "Look out and don't stumble over the cat."

But the other, not heeding him, is speaking rapidly: "This is the house of Suzanne Perriqué, once schoolmistress of No. 32 Rue du Rocher, later of the Rue de Milan, now boarding-house keeper of the Rue de Provence?"

"It is, Monsieur," remarks Alphonse. Mentally he is ejaculating: "This man seems to know a good deal."

"Judging by the number of hats in the hallway, you have lots of gentlemen boarders and but four ladies," observes the visitor, gnawing his moustache meditatively.

"How do you guess that?" gasps Alphonse.

Georgina gasps also!

She is lolling about not very far from the speakers, seated juvenile fashion on one foot and kicking the other about uneasily. Though she is devouring their conversation, neither the waiter nor the visitor pays any attention to her. Childhood was childhood in those days, and a girl was an infant as long as she was in the schoolroom. Consequently, young Mrs. Horton has all the privileges of childhood, including that of being considered nobody.

"As I entered the hall you called downstairs: 'Four cups of tea for breakfast!'" explains the visitor. "The fad is now for ladies to drink tea. Most of your boarders arrived only recently."

"What makes you think that?" stammers the *garçon*.

"The butcher boy at your door told me that three weeks ago he only delivered three pounds of meat a day. This morning he delivered thirty."

"Unexpected arrivals," stammers Alphonse. "*Comme il faut*——"

"Exactly: come and go people—transients," breaks in the gentleman. "Take my card to your mistress. I wish to arrange for rooms. I am an American, stopping at the Hotel Saint Quentin."

At the name of the hotel young Mrs. Horton, who is still inspecting the interview with childish assurance, suddenly blushes like a poppy.

"My name is Daniel Webster Rosenbaum," continues the gentleman.

"Americans always pay well," thinks Alphonse, pleasantly, as he again offers a seat to the applicant for board, then carries off the card to Madame Perriqué.

The moment the waiter has gone Georgina sees to her astonishment Mr. Daniel Webster Rosenbaum

glide carelessly from the salon to the hallway, where he rapidly inspects two or three bouquets that had just been left by neighboring florists, examining the cards upon them without any diffidence or hesitation.

From this he returns to the parlor, a look of contentment upon his face. "By gum, I was right. She did come in here!" he is thinking. Then an expression of amazement ripples his acute countenance. "These bouquets and floral offerings addressed to Miss Gertrude Hammond, who is nearly starving, with the compliments of the Count de Pichoir and the card of Monsieur Paul Rousette, take my breath away," he cogitates, and Mr. Daniel Webster Rosenbaum's face grows perturbed and gloomy.

Then his gaze falls upon Georgina, whose big eyes have been watching his unconventional investigation. Noting her juvenile costume, he thinks: "She looks innocent enough to be safe. I dare question this child."

Seating himself carelessly in an armchair, Mr. Rosenbaum, assuming his most pleasant tones, remarks: "Come here, my dear."

"The idea of a man speaking to me in that way!" flutters young Mrs. Horton. "It's my infamously short frock." Glaring at him, she gives two or three surreptitious plucks to lengthen her jupe.

"Don't be frightened, child," exclaims Daniel Webster, soothingly. "Are you the daughter of Madame Perriqué?"

"No; I'm not!" answers Georgina, defiantly. "I am a *boarder* with Madame Perriqué."

"Don't get angry, little one," observes Daniel, pleasantly. "I am sure we shall be great friends. I'll give you some bonbons."

"I don't want bonbons!" snarls the juvenile matron.

But even as she speaks, the astute gentleman, gazing at her, suddenly smites her as if by a flash of lightning, for he exclaims: "By judge and jury, I've seen you before in my wanderings about Paris!"

He looks her over from head to foot as if scarce believing his own sharp eyes and mutters: "Well, I'll be darned!" Then, with a suggestive leer, he laughs: "How is *dear* Jack?"

"Oh, merciful heavens!"

Young Mrs. Horton trembles till the tassels on her high-heeled bottines fairly rustle, for this awful man is saying: "You're the timid child bride who was hanging on that handsome fellow's arm and calling him 'dear husband' and 'adored Jack' and saying, 'Isn't it nice to be married?'"

"No, no," shivers Georgina.

Then she grows crimson to the roots of her pig-

tail, next cold and trembling to her very toes. This horrible creature is observing: "Oh, don't try to deny it. I saw you when you came in at eleven o'clock at night, hanging upon Jack's arm about three weeks ago into the Hotel Saint Quentin. You and your husband had rooms opposite me. You had just walked over from the Gare du Nord. Reckon you had arrived on the London Night Express."

The terrific thought that this man knows her secret would probably produce a fit of hysterics in the detected bride did not the awful voice of her ex-schoolmistress from the hall, saying: "Alphonse, is the gentleman in the parlor?" force young Mrs. Horton to make a desperate effort to control her nerves. She pleads with pallid lips: "Oh, mercy, don't—don't tell Madame Perriqué!" and holds herself up by a chair, so agitated she can hardly stand, as the landlady enters the apartment with Rosenbaum's card in her hand and business in her eye.

Noting the extraordinary attitude of her charge, the ex-schoolmistress says shortly: "Georgina, what's the matter with you? Come here."

Crushed by her embarrassing situation, young Mrs. Horton falters meekly: "Yes, ma'am," and does as she is bid.

Putting an arm protectingly over the fluttering

shoulders and assuming her old monitorial tone, Suzanne looks at her charge searchingly and remarks in sudden suspicion: "What makes you tremble?"

"N—noth—nothing," stammers the youthful matron, dropping her head.

"Ah, you're confused. You know I never permit you to be sentimental in the presence of gentlemen."

This scene has been instructive to Daniel Webster. Observing Madame Perriqué's authoritative tone and the submissive way in which Georgina had answered, into his mind has flown this sudden idea: "By Jove, a schoolgirl elopement!" He now laughs: "A spoilt child, Madame?"

"I'm afraid so," answers the ex-schoolmistress. "Georgina, go and sit over there while I speak to this gentleman." She points to a distant chair.

Appalled by fear of discovery, young Mrs. Horton falters: "Yes, Madame Perriqué," and, trying to look defiant, throws herself in childish attitude upon the chair indicated, sitting upon one pretty foot and kicking the other nervously about. She reflects afrightedly: "If that sneaking, four-eyed wretch should tell Perriqué she will telegraph my uncle sure."

But unheeding her, Suzanne has already turned to the astute Daniel Webster, and looking him over

searchingly, has remarked: "You wish to engage rooms, Monsieur?"

"Certainly," answers the lawyer, adding, with business caution, "if your charges are all right."

"My charges are all right for *me*," replies Madame Perriqué, stoutly. "I can give you a single bedded room on the top floor for one hundred and fifty francs a week."

"Holy poker!" ejaculates Daniel with a whistle. In his mind is the unpleasant thought: "I've got to stand it, though. One hundred and fifty francs a week shall not drive me out." Therefore, he replies shortly: "Madame, I'll go you!" observing in explanation: "You must set a good table. Every other boarding-house about here is empty. Yours is crowded to the roof."

"Very well," replies Madame Perriqué. "My payments are strictly in advance."

As Mr. Rosenbaum produces a well-filled pocket-book and counts out the *billets de banque*, Suzanne, glancing at Georgina, who is fidgeting nervously upon her chair, commands, testily: "Why are you so restless? First position!"

The dread of being questioned as to her agitation makes Georgina docile; she mutters sulkily: "Yes, ma'am," and puts her hands behind her back as if she were in the school-room again.

"You can make out a receipt at your leisure," remarks the lawyer. "I presume you noticed by my card that I am Daniel Webster Rosenbaum, a member of the New Orleans Bar, divorces a specialty. That always justifies inquisitive examination on the most private domestic topics," he laughs.

This remark about examination into private topics doesn't seem to please Perriqué very greatly. She tosses the card petulantly on a nearby table, saying: "I will write a receipt, Monsieur Daniel Webster Rosenbaum," then glances at the *billets de banque* to be sure they are not counterfeits.

As she rises, she suggests to Georgina: "Remember what I said to you."

"Ah, one of the pupils left over from your boarding-school, I presume," observes the lawyer.

"My boarding-school!" ejaculates the instructress in a startled tone. "How do you know that?"

"Oh, you will find that I know most everything," giggles Daniel Webster, pleasantly.

This facetious suggestion produces a very disagreeable effect upon Suzanne. She hurriedly runs over in her mind: "This lawyer investigates private domestic affairs. He has discovered I was a boarding-school mistress." Then it suddenly flashes through her: "He's been investigating *me*. My Heaven, can he be

a detective trying to discover by what ruse I have lured all these male boarders to my house?"

With this she turns at the door, and, coming back, remarks austere: "My terms are two hundred francs a week."

"You said one hundred and fifty," answers Daniel Webster. "Besides, you accepted that amount. A legal contract, Madame Perriqué."

Legal contracts are very little to the average boarding-house lady. Suzanne returns: "My only vacant apartment, now I think of it, is two hundred and fifty francs a week. You can sue me if you like. But there is no record in a French court of an American ever obtaining judgment against a Parisian."

"By Blackstone, I believe you're right," sighs Daniel Webster, impressed by this peculiarity of French justice. Then he says resolutely: "Put me down for the two hundred and fifty francs apartment. I'm a fixture. Here's another hundred francs. That should clinch the matter."

It does! Madame Perriqué grabs the additional *billet de banque*, but Mr. Rosenbaum's very readiness to endure extortion frightens her; she falters to herself: "My prices won't frighten him off. He must be a detective!"

"I'll just step out and have my luggage brought

here from the Hotel Saint Quentin," remarks the gentleman, giving a furtive wink to Georgina, who again nearly faints at the mention of her honeymoon resting place.

Fortunately, Madame Perriqué doesn't note this; she is absorbed in the sickening thought: "Two hundred and fifty francs didn't drive him away. Is this man here to discover why, with every other boarding-house empty—mine is full to overflowing?"

Perceiving his new landlady's abstraction, as she leaves the room, Daniel Webster Rosenbaum, of the New Orleans Bar, rather sharply cogitates: "The old dragon is suspicious of something. But there is only one woman who could by any chance bother me in this matter, and I've made her innoxious," and drifts into a moody reverie about a lady whose charming allurements had produced the mistake of his crafty life. To himself he jeers: "I, a divorce lawyer, marrying a divorced French actress in a New Orleans theatre." But he consoles himself with the reflection: "After she left America, I had the bond cut in Utah,* service by publication." Then he favors his divorced wife with the delicate compli-

*The Territory of Utah was from 1867 to 1874 quite a South Dakota or Rhode Island as regards divorces.—
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ment: "Pish, with her temperament, Euphrosne will by this time have married half a dozen other husbands. Besides, she is not here. At last accounts, she was in Algeria with the Theatre de Racine Dramatic Company."

During this Georgina has regarded him tremblingly; she is about to sneak nervously away from this man holding her awful secret. The rustle of her short but well starched skirts catches Rosenbaum's ear. She inspires a novel idea. Daniel Webster's bright eyes gleam through his glasses. He suddenly thinks: "The fears of this little runaway schoolgirl bride will make her tell me everything about this house." His voice is dominant as he says: "Step here, my pet."

"Don't you dare call me pet!" mutters the distracted Mrs. Horton, coming straight at him with flaming eyes.

But he crushes her with: "Don't be saucy, girl. Your secret, my overgrown schoolgirl eloper, is safe if you do as I wish."

"What—is—is—that?" shudders Georgina, terror and consternation making her voice husky.

"Tell me all about Mademoiselle Gertrude Hammond. You were at school with her at No. 32 Rue du Rocher."

"Tell *you?*" answers Georgina, frantically. "Never!"

"Perhaps it is best for me to relate to Madame Perriqué the story of your honeymoon at the Hotel Saint Quentin," he observes, craftily. "Then you can confess to her, show her your marriage certificate and your wedding ring and beg to be forgiven."

The suggestion has such a fearful effect upon young Mrs. Horton that she utters a plaintive cry and nearly swoons. Recollecting that Jack has taken with him the proofs of their marriage, in her brain is surging: "This man will tell Perriqué I posed as a bride at the Hotel Saint Quentin! And I, with no wedding ring, no marriage lines! What awful thing will Suzanne telegraph to my uncle?"

Seeing her terrific consternation, Mr. Daniel Webster Rosenbaum scoffs mentally: "By criminology, I don't think she's a bride at all. This short-skirted trembling chit has simply sneaked off on an assignation—and been caught at it. Paris is a fast place, but this schoolgirl Messalina is about the swiftest daisy in it."

This consideration banishes all sympathy for the unfortunate Georgina. Rosenbaum says, coercively: "Tell me everything I ask or I'll blow on you to Perriqué," and proceeds to put the trembling juvenile

matron through what he calls "The Third Degree" with such effect that he very shortly receives some revelations about Miss Gertrude Hammond that strike him with consternation.

At the close of the examination he says hurriedly, but threateningly, to his shuddering witness: "Open your mouth about this, and your stern old boss shall know of your Hotel Saint Quentin racket in a second!"

Then Mr. Daniel Webster Rosenbaum veritably staggers from Madame Perriqué's house, snaps his teeth together under his thin lips and emits this startling proposition: "Holy Moses, do twenty-two other men know what I **know**?"

CHAPTER IV.

ARMANDE DE MILLEFLEURS.

This consideration weighs so heavily upon Mr. Rosenbaum's spirits that as he reaches the Rue de La Fayette he hails a *voiture*, believing he can think better in the seclusion of a cab.

As he rolls towards the Hotel Saint Quentin, he hastily runs the matter over. "That overgrown child was too scared to lie to me," he reflects. "I must accept her astounding statements as facts. By gum, the ancient landlady has adopted the penniless Gertrude Hammond. That's a startler! Has Perriqué caught on as well? Holy poker!" he utters a low whistle. "Under the French law, my objective can't marry without her new mamma's consent! I'm sure she won't elope with me to England. Even starvation didn't coerce her to accept yours truly. But if Perriqué says 'Yes' to me! That's an idea." He gnaws his moustache. "Girls in Paris wed the men their guardians tell them to. Gertrude shall not be

my objective, but Perriqué shall. Now to get a clinch on the girl's new mamma."

Turning this over in a mind which is more crafty than astute, Mr. Rosenbaum's face grows more hopeful. "There's a little mystery about that 'ere boarding-house of Perriqué's," he concludes. "During my search for Gertie Hammond in the last few weeks I have wandered into a good many *pensions* in that neighborhood, and every one of them was very sparsely settled. But Perriqué's is so full, she had the cheek to charge me two hundred and fifty francs for a little bedroom. Why is her house full *only* of men? It can't be they've all discovered. There's some other reason for it. Just let me get a good criminal grip on Perriqué and I'll make her consent to her daughter's marriage with Daniel Webster Rosenbaum.

Arriving at the Hotel Saint Quentin, Mr. Rosenbaum hastily packs his trunk in his room, preparatory to dispatching it to Madame Perriqué's. This being finished, he abruptly mutters: "I'll clinch the proof on Georgina!" steps across the hallway to the suite of apartments Jack and his bride had occupied, and ascertains the numbers of the rooms. Strolling to the office of the hotel, he cautiously looks back to the date he wants on the registration book. Finding opposite the numbers of the honeymoon apartment the

names of Mr. and Mrs. John Winter Horton, he makes careful note of the same.

As he, accompanied by a trunk, valise and hat box, drives back to Madame Perriqué's, a greater confidence is in Mr. Rosenbaum's bearing. He reflects: "Anyway, I've got my hand upon one person in the house. That child eloper is too scared to do anything but what I tell her."

In this the legal gentleman is perfectly correct. Terrified by the crafty lawyer's threats, young Mrs. Horton hasn't dared to tell Miss Hammond that the dreaded man has entered the house. In fact, there is naught in her dazed mind except a wild thought: "Jack! If my husband comes, I need no longer dread this horrible wretch's revelation to Perriqué."

Georgina is therefore more than ever anxious to receive her husband's letter, and hearing the postman's knock upon the servant's entrance, she has sneaked downstairs in hope of coming epistle.

Entering the dining-room of Madame Perriqué's *pension*, she is astonished to find it *en fete*. Its table is set for an elaborate *dejeuner a la fourchette*. A bunch of flowers marks ostentatiously one of the places at the dining table. On it is a card inscribed with the congratulations of Madame Perriqué on her *daughter*, Gertrude's, convalescence.

In a little anteroom, arranged on a table, are baskets of flowers, bouquets and two or three ornamental knick-knacks, all having cards or notes attached to them. The landlady has said she is going to celebrate Miss Hammond's complete return to health, and these are presents for the poor but fascinating Gertrude from the crowd of fortune-hunters who are still in pursuit of her.

Alphonse, arranging the breakfast table, has just remarked with a Gallic sneer: "How stupidly cleanly some people are. Ambigue has actually dared to demand a fresh napkin every meal for Mademoiselle Gertrude Hammond. *Diable*, she'll get it. Perriqué seems to adore her as much as any gentleman in the house. Ah, Monsieur Acropolis and Hadji Pacha."

These last words have been addressed to the Turkish official and the Greek diplomatist as they enter, each bearing a big bouquet with a note attached. "These, I presume, are your offerings for Mademoiselle Gertrude Hammond upon this fete in honor of her complete restoration to health," remarks the waiter.

Both the Turk and the Greek murmur words of assent as Alphonse carries their offerings to the little anteroom. Looking about hungrily and discovering

that breakfast is not yet ready, both gentlemen light cigarettes; though noting each other's present to the object of general pursuit, they glare savagely at each other as they pass from the room.

Observing their amity, Alphonse, as he resumes his dining-room duties, smilingly philosophizes: "This extraordinary universal devotion for a poor slavey is gigantically curious. The dashing actress, Armande de Millefleurs, has been here for three weeks and not a man looks at her, though she gazes at every man."

These reflections the waiting Georgina ventures to interrupt, suggesting anxiously: "Alphonse, another postman came a few minutes ago."

"*Voici, petite,*" answers the waiter, affably, and hands her the longed-for epistle.

Pouncing upon the letter with a cry of joy, the bride carries it away to the little alcove. Sinking into a chair, she tears the envelope open and kisses Jack's signature. Her face grows bright as the winter sunshine coming in the windows as she laughs to herself: "Jack says the rash is all gone, and he will soon fix up matters with his aunt, who refuses to see him until all danger of contagion is entirely past. Timid old woman, to dread the measles at *her* age. But Jack writes he's coming in a day or two." She

kisses the letter rapturously, then giggles: "He's glad I'm in such a safe place."

Her meditations are interrupted by Gertrude's voice: "Alphonse, Madame Perriqué asks me to tell you to go to the kitchen and be sure they have breakfast ready promptly. She told me to set the table during your absence."

"Yes, mademoiselle," answers the waiter, politely, and he goes out musing, sympathetically: "Perriqué gets without wages a servant's work out of this poor American girl, who is so exquisite every man in the house adores her."

Picking up a pile of plates from the sideboard, Miss Hammond unaffectedly and contentedly takes up the *garçon's* labors. Not hearing from Georgina, she has regained her spirits, believing she has escaped from her pursuing Nemesis. The bouquet for her on the table attracts her eye, and glancing at Perriqué's attached card, a grateful smile flits over her expressive features.

Just here Georgina, looking up from her letter and finding herself in much better spirits for it, says abruptly: "Gertie, why are you doing that lazy Alphonse's work?"

"I should do something for my bread," returns Miss Hammond simply.

Conscience is smiting Georgina, urging her to warn Gertrude of the pursuing Rosenbaum. But, terrified by his threat of revelation, she does not dare to speak. Remorsefully young Mrs. Horton starts up and, assisting in her friend's labors, exclaims: "Shucks, you needn't be a genteel slavey long, Gertie. Marry!"

"Marry whom?" smiles Gertrude. "The gentlemen who run after me continuously with extravagant compliments?"

"How about the man who only gives you mighty sighs?" suggests Georgina, roguishly, "the one who stalks about this house like a priest in despair."

"Ah, the erratic Gaspard. I only laugh at him." Miss Hammond emits a sigh.

"Pshaw, you don't *always* laugh at him. You sighed as you spoke his name," says the other. "When he built the wood fire for you in the parlor the other day and your other admirers affected not to see you so that they need not demean themselves by soiling their aristocratic hands, did you laugh at him then?"

"No, I—I cried at him," mutters Gertrude, "and then——" a roguish smile ripples her face—"he looked so indignant that I laughed at him."

"Well," assents Georgina, "Armande de Mille-

fleurs, the leading actress of the Theatre Cluny, who tells me she is going to make an enormous success to-night in 'The Passions of Calypso,' doesn't laugh at him. For some reason, that fascinating actress makes love to Moliere."

"What!" A plate drops from Gertrude's hand with a crash and breaks into half a dozen pieces on the floor.

"Oh, murder, you've broken a plate!" shivers Georgina.

But, unheeding her, Miss Hammond, her little hand upon her beating heart, stands gazing with a wild look in her beautiful eyes into the past.

"Cracky, won't mamma give it to you!" giggles the girl matron with a playful gesture of nursery chastisement.

"For Heaven's sake, don't call her my mother!" murmurs Gertie, piteously. But after a moment she half laughs, half sighs: "Madame Perriqué won't be very stern to me. Look at this pretty bouquet she has given me with her compliments on my complete restoration to health."

"That's thundering curious," whispers Georgina. "Perriqué was never known to make a gift before, and that bouquet must have cost three francs! Why, it smells like the one Jack gave me when we were

——” she checks herself, faltering disconcertedly: “Mine was all—all white.”

“Why, one would think yours was a bride’s bouquet,” observes Miss Hammond, roguishly. “This Jack of yours is a very peculiar brother.”

“Yes; he’s—he’s the most peculiar brother you ever saw,” ejaculates Georgina, striving to hide a red face and embarrassment by looking through the dining-room window.

Glancing after her, Gertrude muses: “Georgina is fibbing to me about that Jack.” A look of relief flits over her sensitive countenance as she meditates: “Perchance she fibbed to me about the actress.”

Inspecting the table in the alcove littered with her presents, tears fly into Miss Hammond’s brown eyes. She sighs: “Not even a violet from him. But—but then he is so poor.”

Just at this moment the bohemian stalks into the dining-room bearing Madame Perriqué’s No. 4 high-lows, polished till they shine like Japanese lacquer. Bowing before the astonished girl, he observes: “Madame Perriqué’s boots!”

“Suzanne’s boots!” stammers Gertie.

“Yes; those that she requested you to polish. I took the liberty. Those delicate fingers must not be soiled! I polish off Perriqué herself when I am

rich!" and with this ambiguous threat Moliere seats himself morosely in a distant corner of the apartment.

Gliding to the disconcerted young lady, who is confusedly placing Perriqué's boots out of the way, Georgina whispers: "Rich! Is Ambigue crazy?"

"No; but sometimes I fear his poverty will make him lose his brilliant mind," sighs Miss Hammond.

"Brilliant mind?" grins Georgina. "Luny mind!" she taps her forehead mockingly.

But as she speaks Gertrude starts and looks agitatedly at the fragments of the broken plate upon the floor, for her new mother is heard outside calling to the kitchen: "Alphonse, tell the cook to be sure and overdo the cutlets so they won't eat so many of them."

"Thank you," is the waiter's pleasant response. "There will be more for me to eat."

This suggestion doesn't seem to please the entering landlady, whose sharp eyes encounter the broken crockery. She gives a snort of dismay, and, glaring about the room, demands: "What wretch broke that plate? Georgina, did you?"

"No, ma'am," gasps young Mrs. Horton.

"Gertie, did you?" The new guardian's face looks decidedly austere to her pretty ward, who, however, resolutely steps forward to her, her brown eyes unabashed, her frank lips about to answer.

"If you did," mutters Madame Perriqué——

But at this instant Ambigue, the bohemian, springing alertly from his distant corner, steps in front of the irate landlady and, bowing humbly, remarks: "I broke that plate."

"You? Impossible! What have you to do about the table?"

"Nevertheless, I broke that plate," remarks Molière. "I am perfectly capable of breaking plates." Picking up two or three delicate pieces of china from the table, he smashes them on the floor and observes, convincingly: "You see!" Then as Madame Perriqué emits a snort of dismay and rage, he remarks grandly: "Charge them to the royalties of my play," and returns to his distant seat.

Georgina, despite her terror, emits a giggle, and even Gertrude smiles.

"Mountebank!" screams the landlady, ferociously, pursuing him to his lair. "The royalties of your play! That's what you've been telling me for six months. The royalties of a play that will never be performed!"

"Be not so sure of that!" exclaims Ambigue, turning upon her. "And have a care," he whispers, "for your paltry board, you are subjecting that innocent to the labors of a menial."

But this is scarcely noticed, Georgina has drawn Gertie to one side as the Count de Pichoir follows Alphonse from the hall whispering: "Be careful my card isn't torn from it when she gets my basket of flowers."

"Certainly, Monsieur."

And a moment after, Rousette, arriving from morning rehearsal at the Theatre Cluny, leads the waiter to the alcove and whispers: "A free ticket for the new play to-night. Be sure she receives my box of gloves."

Catching sight of the object of his pursuit, Paul forgets he is a fortune hunter as he looks into her sweet brown eyes, notes her modestly blushing cheeks and divines that her cheap muslin robe conceals a Hebe's form.

But now all the gentlemen in the house come to the dining-room to offer their attentions to a girl whose very elusiveness increases their ardor. Though they woo her for her money, the eyes of many of them light up with more than the love of Mammon as they gaze upon a supposed heiress who, with returning health, has become a Venus.

The French officer from Mexico, Captain Davoust, bows very low to Miss Hammond and hopes the ivory idol which he had looted from an old Aztec temple

will be to her pleasure, and an English betting man tells her she looks like a Derby winner.

Rather jealous of the masculine attentions showered upon Miss Hammond, Georgina sits kicking her feet about discontentedly. None pay any attention to the forlorn bride except the British bookmaker, who says: "Blow my eyes, you're a rum child. What are you always kicking your legs about so for? Run out and chase a hoop in the street."

But just at this time, behind the gentlemen, young Mrs. Horton sees the short, dapper figure of Mr. Daniel Webster Rosenbaum, who, standing on tiptoe, gives her a suggestive glance and motions her to private interview in the parlor.

With a shiver the youthful matron sneaks abjectly from the assembly.

About this time the landlady, noting the eager faces of the gentlemen bowing before her exquisite lure, thinks it proper to make a startling announcement. "Gentlemen," she observes, suavely, "you are all very kind to my ward on her convalescence."

"Your ward!" ejaculates Ambigue, starting up from a gloomy reverie.

"Yes, I may say my adopted daughter."

"Adopted daughter!" Rousette of the Cluny Theatre seizes her by the right hand, the Comte de Pich-

oir by the left, while the others voice their congratulations, eager to gain the good will of the lady who will have the disposal of the hand of the immensely dowered heiress.

"Yes; I adopted her according to French law with her consent yesterday," says the landlady, affably.

Here Ambigue, after meditating distractedly: "What hideous machination does this portend!" stammers affrightedly. "No, no; impossible!"

"Gentlemen," remarks Suzanne, half-laughingly, though her eyes gleam threateningly at the man of letters, "he seems astounded that I love the sunbeam of the house," and puts her arm about the slight waist that yields itself to her clasp.

"*Mon Dieu*, Ambigue is an imbecile!" sneers the Comte de Pichoir.

"Pah, he has as much sentiment as the rats that run around in his garret," laughs Rousette.

"Sentiment," cries Ambigue, turning on the manager. "Have you ever seen any of my plays, Rousette?"

"Thank God, no," jeers the man of the theatre, "though you have persecuted me with them for the last three weeks. But to-night, if you can get an admission to the Cluny, you will see the first performance of a very great one."

"God bless you for the words!" screams Ambigue as he embraces the astonished manager, kissing him fervidly on both cheeks.

"He's—he's crazy!" stammers Paul, pulling himself away.

"Eccentric!" remarks the officer.

"Luny as a March hare!" mutters the English betting man.

But, unheeding them, Ambigue remarks, grandly: "I shall have a box for 'The Passions of Calypso.'"

"Box? Nonsense!" cries Madame Perriqué. "He has no more money than he has soul."

"Soul!" echoes Gertrude, indignantly. "He had soul enough to black your boots, Madame Perriqué, to save my hands. To save me from reproof, he had soul enough to say he broke that plate which I destroyed."

At this unexpected eulogy of the eccentric man of letters every one looks at his beautiful champion astounded.

"Mademoiselle, I kiss your hand," murmurs the grateful Ambigue. As he does so he wonders: "What divine thing is in her eyes?"

"My poor dear," remarks Madame Perriqué, soothingly, "you are hysterical. Let me take you to your room."

For catching some flash in Ambigue's answering glance, Gertrude, blushing to the roots of her hair, has become agitated. Placing her arm affectionately about her ward's waist, Madame Perriqué leads her from the room.

But at the door she pauses and makes the following startlingly unpleasant announcement: "Such is the demand for my rooms, I beg to state, gentlemen, that after to-day my charges for board and lodging are increased twenty per cent."

Her arm about the girl's waist tells the fortune hunters they must accede to her terms to gain permission to address her ward. Notwithstanding this, there is a flurry of miserable dissent. The impecunious Count de Pichoir puts his hand into his empty pockets and reflects: "*Mille diables*, I cannot afford it and yet I cannot leave," and calling: "Madame Perriqué! Madame Perriqué!" he runs out after her to expostulate.

"*Morbleu*, I hope the new play will make money," growls the manager of the Cluny Theatre, and he as well as all the other guests follow the Count to reason with their landlady on her extortionate prices.

"You don't seem affected by Madame's increased charges?" grins Alphonse to the bohemian.

"No," observes Ambigue, philosophically. "A

raise of twenty per cent. on nothing means nothing! What the devil do I care!" and snaps his fingers nonchalantly. Mentally he asks: "What did Mignonette's eyes mean as I thanked her?" Gaspard's slight yet sinuous frame begins to expand; his face glows; he puts his hand to a heart that beats more rapidly, and yet more lightly, than it has done since Mignonette was stolen from him by a remorseless schoolmistress.

His day dream is interrupted by a voice of brilliant yet softly passionate timbre saying, merrily: "Musing of a new dramatic situation, my dear Ambigue?"

With a start the bohemian awakes and finds himself face to face with a lady whose dashing charms are such that Alphonse has often wondered why she has received no more attention from the male bipeds about the house. Arrayed in an exquisite toilette, but so dashing it is almost sensational, Armande de Millefleurs, the leading lady of the Cluny Theatre, looks exactly what she is—an actress, piquant enough to play light comedy, yet passionate enough to display the stronger emotions of the tragedienne. But for her roaming, erratic disposition, she would probably have made a great success on the Parisian stage. Had she remained in the capital she might have become its idol, but she had wandered everywhere, ap-

pearing behind the footlights on every French stage from Martinique to Algeria. Returned to Paris, for the last year she has been the bright luminary at the Theatre Cluny. Avaricious, yet extravagant, spending more than she makes, she is forever demanding an increase of salary from Rousette, its manager, and always in debt.

Apparently she and the dramatist are quite intimate, which is reasonable enough, as Ambigue has been very attentive to the actress during the last few weeks, trying to pick up scraps of information as to how the rehearsals of his play have gone. Bowing before her, he laughs: "My dear Armande, I am glad you were not here a few moments ago or you would have been shocked. Madame Perriqué has announced that she has increased her prices twenty per cent."

"Oh, what matters that to me?" remarks the lady, nonchalantly. "I have not paid Madame Perriqué since I came here any more than you have."

"Yes," interjects Alphonse, pausing in the arrangement of the breakfast-table, "and Madame Perriqué is commencing to talk savage about your bill."

"Then thank God she is not present," observes the actress, lightly. "That horrible old woman always deranges my artistic senses. You can remove my

cloak, dear Ambigue." She has just arrived from the theatre.

"*Dear* Ambigue," reflects the bohemian, as he removes a very expensive *manteau de promenade* from the beautifully moulded shoulders Armande turns towards him. "Does the cordiality of this great actress indicate she suspects I have written Calypso?"

During this Alphonse departs for the kitchen on some errand connected with the coming meal.

"Rehearsals went very well," continues the lady, favoring Moliere with a peculiar glance from her soft, sensuous, passionate eyes, "everybody a little nervous, though. Rousette cut a few of the lines of the drama."

"Cut a few lines!" screams Ambigue, with rage and horror in his voice; adding a muttered: "I'll cut his throat!"

"You know we play it to-night for the first time," observes the actress, concealing a smile, but suggesting modestly: "I shall be superb as Calypso."

"Thank God!" ejaculates the bohemian, rapturously.

"No, thank *me*," she whispers, "when I have made your play a success."

"*Ciel*, you know?" Ambigue looks at her nervously.

"That you are the author of 'Calypso'? Of course, I do," says Armande, vivaciously. "Don't you recollect you read the play to me a year ago, immediately after my return from Algeria, before I entered the Cluny Theatre. I remembered it as soon as it was in rehearsal. Who could forget that last divine scene—ah! For my grand acting to-night, I hope you will be grateful to me."

"Very grateful," murmurs the author, kissing her delicate hand rapturously and repeatedly.

"Don't salute my fingers too often," laughs the lady, "they don't lead to my lips." She taps the author with her parasol. "Even after I make your play a triumph, remember, I can never marry."

"*Diable*, who asked you to!" growls Ambigue, morosely.

"*Mon ami*, I always tell my admirers that before they grow too passionately desperate," observes the artiste, modestly. "I was so unfortunate as to wed, when a simple ingenue in New Orleans and known by the humble stage name of Euphrosne, a brutal American lawyer, who ill-treated me frightfully."

"The miserable ruffian!" mutters the author, who dare not fail to display sympathy with the actress who is going to appear in the title role of his drama this very night.

"I am glad you sympathize with me," laughs the lady. "He was so unkind as to request me to pay my own board bills out of my own salary. Worse, he wanted to collect my salary for me. But that brutality," she says, angrily, "I would not submit to, and fled back to France. Still, Daniel Webster Rosenbaum was an extremely attractive man. He was in New Orleans about some claims for stolen cotton against the General Butler."

"Daniel Webster Rosenbaum—a name good for a comedy Yankee," murmurs the bohemian, with an eye to stage character.

"I always make my admirers jealous by saying that Dan—I use the American diminutive—was an extremely attractive *crévé*," continues the actress. "But as Madame Perriqué will be coming, and as I believe she intends to demand my paltry board bill, I'll say *au revoir*, my dear Ambigue."

"Adieu, great artiste," murmurs the bohemian, kissing her hand.

As Armande steps from the side entrance of the dining-room a handkerchief flutters from her hand.

The dramatist picks up the bit of lace and wonders: "Did she mean this for a *gage d'amour*? Lace trimmed, monogrammed A. de M.—a very effective kerchief to wipe my eyes with as I this evening

make my bow from the author's box and say 'emotion overcomes.' " He puts it in his pocket. "*Mon Dieu*, I am so excited I must smoke! Cigarettes! Where are they? Oh, Hadji Pacha, the Turk, has left his case. I'll borrow one or two."

Lighting one of these and strolling nervously about the halls of the house, Moliere chances to see a newcomer in close conversation with the perturbed-looking Georgina in a corner of the salon. Wondering who the man is, he sees the card that Perriqué had carelessly thrown upon the little table in the reception-room. It probably belongs to the new visitor. He picks it up and he reads: "Daniel Webster Rosenbaum." "This is beyond coincidence," he thinks. Then a cruel terror smites him; he shudders: "*Di-able*, Armande's brutal husband! He is in the house in pursuit of her. *Mon Dieu*, should she see him the shock will destroy the nerves of the actress who plays this evening the heroine of my great drama. Under her husband's persecution Armande might be too ill to appear at the Cluny to-night." This has such a distracting effect upon the author that, trying to think how to protect his actress, he wanders abstractedly into the dining-room.

Here the harsh voice of Madame Perriqué greets him. She is saying to Alphonse: "And this actress

has the audacity for three whole weeks to occupy my best apartment, to eat my best food, and doesn't pay. I'll have it out with her now."

The landlady is turning from the dining-room with business in her eyes, but is suddenly halted by an authoritative tap upon the shoulder. Ambigue pleads pathetically: "Don't disturb the sensitive nerves of an artiste!"

"Why not? This actress never pays," snarls Madame Perriqué. Then her face grows white.

Drawing her aside, Ambigue whispers: "You have more to consider than a board bill! Madame Perriqué, you stand upon catastrophe!"

"Catastrophe!" stammers the landlady.

"Yes; there is a strange man in the parlor. This is his card, I believe."

"Yes; Rosenbaum," mutters Suzanne, faintly. "What do you know of him? He has engaged board with me."

"He has no forged letter, but he is questioning your child boarder minutely as to Mademoiselle Gertrude Hammond," whispers Ambigue.

These words have scarcely left his lips before Madame Perriqué, darting from the apartment, after one terrific shudder: "*Mon Dieu*, the detective!" is heard calling through the house: "Georgina! Geor-

gina, come here instantly! If I catch you flirting with a gentleman——”

“Her fears will make Perriqué drive this pursuing husband of Armande de Millefleurs out of the house,” reflects the bohemian, complacently. But thoughts of the actress produce a new consideration, which makes him extremely anxious; to the waiter he says, hurriedly and appealingly: “Alphonse, have you any money?”

“None to lend,” remarks the *garçon*, doggedly. “Monsieur already owes me seventeen francs and fifty centimes.”

“*Diable*,” moans the dramatist to himself. “What shall I do for a proper dress suit this evening? When I am called, the audience will sneer at my dilapidated garments. Money to hire one I must have. Perriqué—impossible. To Rousette I do not dare to say ‘I am thy author; let me have thy pocketbook.’ The divine look in Gertrude’s eyes has made this fortune hunter hate me. He might destroy my drama on its birth. A play on its first night is like an infant coming into the world—the slightest accident may produce a still-born child. When it has run a hundred nights, it is strong enough to fight its own battle.”

Here, catching sight of the numerous gifts ar-

ranged for his sweetheart, Ambigue sighs: "*Mon Dieu*, how crushing is poverty. All save me are rich enough to make my Gertrude gifts upon her convalescence."

Passing his hand wildly through his hair, and rolling his eyes pathetically, the unfortunate bohemian sinks down in the little alcove and meditates how to raise the wind.

While Ambigue is thus engaged the New Orleans lawyer steps into the main dining-room, looking for his breakfast. He is reflecting discontentedly. "This Georgina has confessed to me that Gertrude Hammond is half in love with some scribbler. These bohemians are such crazy fools they are sometimes dangerous to girls' hearts. Four times have I succeeded in expelling Miss Hammond from situations so starvation would make her accept me for a husband. Starvation didn't seem to make her like me. Now something to gain her heart. With all these fellows after her, I must push matters."

This pushing matters is one of the weak spots in Rosenbaum's character. He will not let things take their natural course. He now proceeds to push matters, with dire effect upon himself. An idea, which he thinks immense, strikes him. "I'll hire the waiter to insult her and permit me to chastise him. Then she'll look upon me as a hero."

Ambigue, from the seclusion of the alcove, sees the dreaded husband of Armande beckon to Alphonse and whisper a few words cautiously in his ear.

The waiter starts, gazes at the lawyer, astonished, and mutters, deprecatingly: "I annoy Miss Hammond?"

"Certainly. I'll give you a napoleon just to make her scream once. You can do it delicately, regular French fashion; disagreeable, but polite. Just enough to give me an excuse to spring out upon you and gain her admiration by thumping you. Since you are reluctant, two napoleons."

But the waiter, raising his voice, proudly says: "No one could be impolite to that poor, but charming young lady. Monsieur, I decline your ignoble offer!" and, drawing himself up haughtily, the *gargon* strides from the apartment.

But now beside Mr. Daniel Webster Rosenbaum is standing Ambigue, the bohemian, and whispering to him in a voice muffled by agony: "I heard your offer to the waiter. I will make Miss Hammond scream for two napoleons—CASH!"

The cringing figure before him looks to Daniel what he calls "easy." He answers, eagerly, "Done!"

"At last I have the money for the dress suit to-night," reflects the poor author, as he pockets the gold pieces.

"She'll be coming here soon," directs the lawyer, rapidly. "When she screams, I'll rush out upon you and thump you lightly. The understanding is you make her scream."

"Yes, I'll make her scream. God forgive me, I'll make her scream."

"Then I'll await her outcry in this alcove," remarks the lawyer. "When I hear I'll spring out upon you and chastise you."

"That is as monsieur pleases." The bohemian is bowing to the earth so that his eyes, glaring like lurid fire-balls, cannot be seen.

They are interrupted by the sweep of soft, rustling muslin in the hall. Mr. Daniel Webster Rosenbaum retreats into the alcove.

A moment after, Miss Gertie having recovered from her nervous attack, trips into the dining-room, ready for breakfast. Seeing Ambigue awaiting her with appealing eyes, she would turn modestly away. But he steps abruptly to her and whispers beneath his breath: "One favor, Mignonette; please scream."

In response to this strange request, the girl gazes at him, astounded, almost affrighted. His face is flushed, his breath issues from his lips in quick, short gasps.

"Please scream, just once, for Gaspard."

Here Gertrude does utter a little nervous yell; she thinks poverty and misery have made Gaspard a maniac.

With the cry out rushes Daniel Webster Rosenbaum. He exclaims: "Villain, why did that lady scream? Gertrude, I am here!" and, like a fool, slaps Ambigue.

With a bound like a panther, the bohemian is upon him. Ambigue doesn't know how to punch, but he knows how to kick, and he gives Daniel a *savate* upon the solar plexus that doubles him as if he were a jumping jack.

Writhing on the floor, Rosenbaum is gasping: "Murder! Villain, you have not kept your contract!"

"To the letter! *Mon Dieu*, do you suppose I would permit you to beat me in her divine presence? To that I did not agree," whispers Ambigue, quietly. With this he suddenly turns, and, bowing devotedly, says: "Mignonette, thank you for the scream."

But Miss Hammond, recognizing the lawyer's face, has fled, shuddering, from the apartment.

With a muffled cry of horror, Ambigue darts after his flying sweetheart, leaving Rosenbaum to the assistance of Alphonse, who, hearing the commotion,

has darted in to see what is the matter. Through his assistance a great stroke of good luck is bestowed on the writhing schemer. The agile waiter promptly drags the lawyer to a little sofa in the retired alcove, upon which he leaves him, rubbing his stomach and gasping for breath.

Guessing the reason of the fracas, Alphonse turns to his duties in the dining-room, grinning to himself: "*Morbleu*, he tried to hire Ambigue to insult his own sweetheart, and *diable*, that's what happened to the scoundrel."

Though Rosenbaum's mind is at first concentrated upon the pain in his stomach, as his anguish grows less it gradually turns to revenge. This suddenly, by ill-chance, is placed within his hands. He is still lying on the sofa, when a soft, sensuous feminine voice makes him start and look astounded. It comes to him lightly from the adjoining dining-room: "Alphonse, I am a little fatigued with rehearsal; serve for me in my parlor a delicate breakfast—a dozen *petit* oysters, a fresh brook trout, a succulent sweetbread, a chicken partridge, a bunch of hothouse asparagus, an ethereal omelet soufflét and a pint of Chateau Lafitte."

This modest order is broken in upon by the sharp voice of the landlady, who comes sweeping in: she

says, sternly: "Alphonse, away, while I see if Mademoiselle Armande de Millefleurs has an appetite for my bill."

The waiter goes laughingly from the room. Then writhing upon the sofa, the startled expression on Daniel Webster's face gradually gives way to one of victory. He listens with all his ears. The ladies are quite close to him, and, though their voices at first are cautious, as rage excites them their tones become more strident.

"Savage," remarks the actress, languidly, "you have your disagreeable bill with you?"

"Of course, I have; receipted, too!" Rosenbaum can hear the landlady tap the paper viciously.

"Give it to me. I will pay it in full." The artiste's voice is nonchalantly debonair.

"Pay me? That's right. I have always said you were a lady." Perriqué's manner is more conciliatory. "Permit me to present it. Here it is."

The lawyer cautiously and noiselessly turns his face. He sees a lady he had once known extremely well, looking even more beautiful than she had been years ago, take the bill and coolly pocket it. Then he hears her observe, laughingly: "Thank you."

"But my money?" demands Madame Perriqué.

"Call to-morrow." The actress is sweeping towards the door. "*Au revoir.*"

"My money now!" Suzanne's lean fingers clutch her delicate wrist. "I'll have it *now!*"

"Then take it *now!*" With her finest tragic sweep, Armande turns upon her landlady. "Madame Perriqué, why for three weeks do you suppose I have eaten your best dinners and drunk your best wine?" she remarks, in sneering tones.

"Because you are a glutton!" retorts Suzanne, in vindictive frankness.

"Because I knew I could get them for *nothing.*" This is in Armande's breeziest comedy way.

"Nothing? You don't know *me!*" says Perriqué, savagely.

"No; but I know your criminal secret." Though this is in the tone of a stage whisper, Rosenbaum catches it.

He also notes the disconcertion of the landlady's manner as she starts and falters: "My secret!" then questions, anxiously: "What do you know?"

"I know you have enticed to your house fortune-hunters in pursuit of a mythical American heiress, one Gertrude Hammond of Mississippi," replies the actress, in low, laughing voice.

"Sh-h-h, not so loud," whispers the landlady.

"I'll shout it to the four winds of heaven if I please. That, by means of letters apparently written

by her, you have made this crowd of dupes believe your imaginary Miss Hammond rich. Supposing I denounce you to the law."

"No, no; anything but that!" shudders Madame Perriqué.

"Shall I hand you over to justice," sneers Armande, "or is my little bill paid in full?"

"It is paid in full," stammers the landlady; then queries, astoundedly: "But how did you discover?"

"How? Ha—ha—ha." The actress's laugh is very merry. "The letters signed Gertrude Hammond were all written in a nice, feminine hand."

"So they were. I never thought of that," mutters Madame Perriqué.

"Well, it was necessary that my friend, Moliere, for the complete success of his ruse, should have a feminine amanuensis. I had known the poor fellow several years in an artistic, bohemian way. He had been imploring me to play one of his pieces. To me he came about the matter and told me his plot, and I wrote those letters to aid poor Ambigue. This hand signed the name of the imaginary Miss Hammond to them all."

"You—you signed *her* name? Then I have *you*!" replies Madame Perriqué, suddenly. "Denounce me——" she taps the actress on the shoulder, "and we both go to prison together."

"Oh, you jest," sneers De Millefleurs, debonairly. "Signing the name of a *mythical* person is no crime."

"But signing the name of a *real* one is."

"Real? Absurd! You jest."

"Miss Gertrude Hammond is in this house now."

"Oh," jeers the actress, "the disguised ballet girl you have here for your bait!"

"For my bait!" answers Perriqué. "Though her presence in the house is but an accident, the young lady you scoff is one of my former pupils. Ambigue took her name from my old school list. She came to me in distress. She is the real Miss Gertrude Hammond of Mississippi, America. She is a young lady of high spirit, who will prosecute you for daring to sign her name to letters for so infamous an object. Ah, now you turn pale, Armande de Millefleurs." Perriqué's voice is menacing. "Your crime is forgery, though I shall not denounce you."

"Because to denounce me is to denounce yourself!" observes Armande, growing more confident at the thought.

"But pack up your things, get out of the house, eat no more of my food—don't dare to devour even the breakfast—and I spare you," commands the ex-schoolmistress.

"I shall leave your house, Madame," replies the

artiste, grandly. "I will accept from you no further hospitality if it is unpleasant to you. Yet, remember, if knowledge of this affair comes to the world, your house will not only be empty of all of its lodgers, but very unpleasant things may happen to you. I merely mention this in case, in some avaricious moment, you might try to detain my magnificent wardrobe. Adieu, Madame Perriqué, it is the last time you will have the honor of having Armande de Millefleurs beneath your ignoble roof," and the leading lady of the Theatre Cluny, in her finest *grande dame* manner, sweeps proudly from the apartment.

"Humph, thank God for the leaving of that non-paying gourmand," growls Perriqué to herself. "Now I'll look over the gifts of these idiots for my ward, to see what will be useful to me, her mother."

She steps into the alcove briskly, then emits a little, faltering shriek, claps her skinny hand to her heart, and gasps: "My God, the detective!" For, lying supinely on the sofa, a hideous smile on his crafty features, is Daniel Webster Rosenbaum.

"Now, Madame Perriqué," he says, imperatively, "I'll take your confession."

"My God, you've overheard everything!" and Suzanne reels, staggers and sinks, half-fainting, into a chair. Before she rises Mr. Rosenbaum has put

the trembling woman through his "third degree" even more completely than he had the short-skirted bride.

At its close, after reciting the penalties for fraud and conspiracy until she nearly faints, Mr. Rosenbaum, with a few words of explanation, makes such a proposition to the affrighted landlady that she starts up and shudders: "No, no; impossible! Gertie would never consent."

"Do it!" he commands, menacingly, "or to-night you sleep in prison. Besides, this will be your salvation."

"How?" she gasps; and he explaining to her, she utters a nervous, shuddering assent, and murmurs: "*Mon Dieu*, you are a wonder!"

"Now," remarks Rosenbaum, in brisk vindictiveness, for the guests are already entering the dining-room, "after breakfast we'll annihilate the pauper who kicked *me*!"

CHAPTER V.

GASPARD AND MIGNONETTE.

But during this time the pauper who kicked Mr. Rosenbaum has been doing some lusty work.

Astonished and trembling, Miss Gertie Hammond has fled from the scene of battle to the little reception room, where she can be alone. She is terrified at the pursuit of Rosenbaum, but she is horrified by the fear that poverty has made Gaspard crazy.

Sighing, she has sunk into an armchair, and rested her head moodily upon one white hand.

She is aroused by the other being covered with tender kisses. Ambigue is kneeling before her pleading: "For the love of God, forgive me for alarming you, dear Mademoiselle. But when I heard that villain trying to engage poor Alphonse to insult you, that he might play the hero by attacking the waiter, I took the supreme liberty of taking the waiter's place."

This statement is somewhat disingenuous—Moliere says nothing of the two napoleons that he pocketed

by the transaction; but his explanation seems to be acceptable.

The beautiful girl murmurs: "Oh, thank you—thank you, dear Monsieur Ambigue;" then shudders: "That awful man!"

"What man?"

"The one whose face has always been a misfortune to me."

"A misfortune to you!" echoes the bohemian, ferociously. "Had I known that, I should have kicked him into the other world."

"Yes, through all my poverty in Paris, after the death of my parents by yellow fever," replies Miss Hammond, pensively, yet sadly, "whenever that man's face crossed my vision, it seemed to threaten the very bread I ate."

"*Mon Dieu*, the miscreant!"

"If he passed me by, some humble situation that gave me a livelihood, slipped from me and left me helpless," sighs the girl. "And each time this Daniel Webster Rosenbaum offered to marry me."

"Offered to marry you!" whispers Ambigue, a horror in his voice as if this were some monstrous crime. Then passion for the lovely being whose eyes are alluring in their very modesty, overcoming prudence, he asserts in savage ardor: "But fear him no more;

from to-day no one shall pursue you but I, Ambigue!"

"Oh, mercy!" falters the maiden, and moves so the table is between her and the impassioned dramatist. Though pleasing to her, the very ardor of Ambigue's eyes almost terrifies her; she bashfully whispers: "Madame Perriqué has forbidden me to permit you to address me. You must not stay here. The men coming through the hall to breakfast will see you with me."

"I go not from here until you say you have forgiven me."

Then, though she turns away her head, Gertrude falters tenderly, yet archly: "I—I like your sympathy. You have my gratitude, dear Monsieur Ambigue."

"Gratitude? Pish!" mutters the lover. "I'd sooner have the jeers with which you flaunted Gaspard's violets in the Rue du Rocher."

"Flaunted your violets—jeers? Oh, no," whispers the girl. "Georgina and the other girls laugh. I—I cried for you!"

"Cried for me! Was that not equally humiliating?" queries the bohemian, morosely. "The scoff of a girl's boarding-school—my God, that's what my devotion brought to me!"

"Devotion?" Gertrude's eyes glow as she recollects the bright face of the fascinating Gaspard who but two years before had made her young heart beat in the Rue du Rocher. She says, in impulsive reproach: "Then it was your pride that has kept you from me all these weeks when I was alone here, unprotected from the pursuit of all these men. You stood aloof from me because of some petty wound to your false pride."

"Thank God, you noticed my coldness!" ejaculates the impassioned Moliere. "Now I must speak."

"No, no!" pleads the girl, bashfully.

"It were a crime if I remained silent! Made-moiselle Hammond—Gertrude — Mignonette, wilt listen to a poor few words that come from an almost breaking heart?"

"Why not?" answers the maiden, simply and proudly. "Of all the men who pursue me in this house, you are the only one who has given me more than protestations."

"Pah, I've saved your white hands from making a fire and blacking Madame Perriqué's accursed boots, and your tender spirit from harsh words for a broken plate—paltry things, which until to-day your lips have not acknowledged."

"Situated as I am, a girl should be very careful of her words," falters Gertrude, diffidently.

"That means that a man should be bold in his!" whispers the fervid Gaspard. "Only poverty has kept my lips closed." He has glided beside the drooping form. His arm is outstretched to clasp the being he loves. He mutters morbidly: "Could I say: 'A pauper woos you; come to my garret, Gertrude, we'll have a honeymoon among the rats.'"

"Rats!" shrieks the startled maid, gathering her skirts about her, and about to spring upon a neighboring chair.

"*Diable*, the very mention frightens you," he sighs.

"Only of the—the rats," she murmurs, bashfully.

"And not of the honeymoon?" He has seized her little wrist. "Ah, your words open my lips. To-night my play is produced at the Cluny."

"*Your* play!" she whispers, astoundedly—for a moment fearing her first divination has been true and misfortune has destroyed her lover's intellect.

"Yes, anonymously; but my name as its author will be announced from the stage."

"Oh, I'm so—so happy, that you have a chance in life!"

Then, while Perriqué's gong is sounding throughout the house, summoning the fortune hunters who are in pursuit of Miss Hammond to breakfast, as they pass by the reception-room, the prize that they struggle for is ravished from them.

"Without you I have no chance," Ambigue whispers. "Wilt take it with me?"

"If you ask me to, Gaspard," sighs Gertrude, and hangs her head.

"Mignonette!" His voice is very tender; he kisses her hand formally.

Then the two lonely hearts begin to speak to each other, and a love that in its first birth had been assassinated by cruel circumstances lives all the stronger in its second life.

The girl's face is flaming as the aurora borealis and her eyes sparkle like arctic stars.

"Mignonette!" He has her in his arms. His kisses burn like fire upon her lips. Her heart flutters against his, she is sobbing in his arms.

"Tears in thy eyes, adoration of my soul!" he whispers.

"Of—of rapture, Gaspard," she falters, and, modestly drawing from him, sinks into a chair.

Ambigue whips out the lace handkerchief of the actress, wipes his pretty sweethearth's orbs with it, and laughs: "No red eyes, my adored goddess, to arouse Perriqué's suspicions in the dining-room."

Then the tramp of masculine feet on their way to breakfast makes him grind his teeth. "Now," he says, in the proud confidence of victory, "if one of those

fortune hunters dares to say 'love' to you, send him to Ambigue."

"Fortune hunters!" ejaculates Gertrude, and, turning astounded eyes to him, notes her lover's face is contorted with anguish.

To himself, Ambigue is moaning: "But I dare not tell this being I adore I have made her the lure of these boulevardiers." With quick wit he asserts: "Yes; fortune hunters! What greater wealth than that of youth, beauty and love? In it I am rich, Mignonette!" His arm encircles her lithe, yielding waist. His kisses show that he feels the maid belongs to him.

"Oh, Gaspard, in your arms, poor as we are, I can be happy!" she says, sweetly.

"Pish, an empty pocket is a curse; want is a crime!" shudders the bohemian. "That's why to-night my soul cries out for triumph. Success for my play means riches for me, wealth for you. Every grote the grasping manager pays me, every salvo of applause the grudging public throws at me, shall be tossed at thy feet. And for this reason my piece must be superbly played."

Then, to the astonishment of his betrothed, Ambigue suddenly half-screams: "The actress; I had forgotten her accursed husband. Flight is the safest way!" and strides towards the door.

Rising, Gertrude falters: "Armande, the actress?" a strange dread in her voice.

"Yes; Armande de Millefleurs. You will excuse me. Go to the dining-room and be happy at your breakfast with your adopted mother, before whom, to-morrow, I shall bow and demand your hand. But no word of my play to Rousette. He is my rival; he might destroy it."

His sweetheart would call him back for explanation, but the door opens abruptly and Madame Perriqué's perturbed face is seen. She says, hurriedly, almost timidly: "My guests are awaiting you at the table, Gertie."

"I am coming, Madame Perriqué," and Miss Hammond arises, abstractedly shoving the actress's handkerchief into her pocket.

Noting that her ward's eyes are red, her manner embarrassed, and that Ambigue's face seems covered with an excited triumph, Suzanne remarks to Gertrude, as they pass along the hall, side by side, towards the stairs leading to the dining-room: "You remember what I told you about that beggarly fellow?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Very well; don't forget it. I want your love, my child, but shall also exact obedience. You must not

be foolish about this out-at-elbows bohemian." Despite the motherly tone of the ex-schoolmistress, it contains an implied warning.

To this her adopted daughter doesn't answer, though as she walks down the stairs after Madame Perriqué a latent defiance springs up in her lovely eyes. Perhaps it is not altogether for her landlady, but for the assembled gentlemen she sees about the breakfast table, waiting to do her honor.

They are all very effusive to sweet Mademoiselle Gertrude this morning, and amid the presentation of their gifts on her restoration to complete health the breakfast runs along. Then they quarrel with each other for the honor of toasting divine Miss Hammond till Madame Perriqué says: "As her mother, I claim that privilege!" At which there are bravos from most of them and shouts of "*Mashallah!*" from the Turk and "*Evoi!*" from the Greek.

Upon this, Mr. Rosenbaum, who has seemingly recovered his appetite, looks from his place of honor, besides the hostess, with a humorous grin, though his eyes at times light up in a sarcastic triumph, that makes the pretty Gertrude droop her orbs modestly upon the tablecloth.

But the girl is so supremely happy, as the recollection of Ambigue's impassioned kisses bring the flam-

ing color to her fair cheeks, that even the pusuing Daniel Webster has little terror for her. She feels there is one true heart in the house that beats for her, and the devotion of Gaspard makes her confident. She even laughs as the Comte de Pichoir sneers at Rosenbaum's creole French which the lawyer has picked up in Louisiana.

"You just wait, young man," says Daniel, in jovial significance, "when you hear me talk French some day, you'll jump with joy." As he makes this assertion, Mr. Rosenbaum winks good-naturedly at Madame Perriqué, but the landlady is so embarrassed at his facetiousness that she gives her English boarder twice as much omelet as she had intended to.

Once, during the meal, Gertrude overhears the New Orleans lawyer whisper to her new mother: "Cut this breakfast as soon as you can, so we can have our business confab." Then the adopted girl's cheeks grow pale as Madame Perriqué's tones become even more motherly, and every time the ex-schoolmistress calls her "daughter" consternation flies through Miss Hammond, for Rosenbaum's eyes seem to emphasize the title.

A moment after, some latent suggestion in them causes her cheeks to become redder than they had even under Ambigue's passionate kisses; in this man's

glances there is, not only pursuit, but authority—aye, even possession!

A sickening dread enters Miss Hammond's heart, not for herself, but for her love—in the absence of a father, the power of a mother in France is very great. No daughter can legally wed without her consent till she is twenty-five, and Miss Hammond, by assenting to Madame Perriqué's adoption, has under French law given to Suzanne maternal authority.

And she has reason to fear. A very unscrupulous gentleman has determined that the young lady sitting before him at the breakfast table shall be his, and no one else's. He has been educated in a school where successfully rascality is much more respected than unsuccessful rectitude—that of the Southern States of America during the carpet-bag regime.

Originally hatched in Ann Street, New York, the youthful Daniel Webster Rosenbaum had been the clerk of a police court in the early sixties; but, discovering that there was more money in government contracts and cotton stealing in Louisiana than there was in driving a quill filling up blank warrants in Mott Street, New York, he had migrated to New Orleans, and prospered under the latter part of the rule of Benjamin F. Butler, during this time mating with as pretty a soubrette as ever fascinated a creole audience in the Orleans theatre.

At the close of the war in the United States, Mr. Rosenbaum had hoisted his shingle as a lawyer on Canal Street, and flourished politically during the early part of the carpet-bag period. But, suddenly discovering a great chance for a fortune, he had one day left his office in charge of his partner, Monsieur Lerue, and for the last few months has been in Paris.

His mind is what such an education would naturally make it—acute, without being broad; crafty, without being astute; and yet full of self-assertive, combative confidence. He would not hesitate to discuss ecclesiastical law with a bench of bishops or to refute a Mansfield or a Blackstone on civil and political jurisprudence. His motto is: “The means don’t count if you get the bill through.”

He thinks the blushing young lady seated near to him is practically under his thumb, and his manner becomes so confident, his smile so urbane and his glance so possessive, that Gertie shivers as he says: “Now, Madame Perriqué, for a few minutes’ business confab.”

Miss Hammond knows it will be about her. She feels that her fate almost depends upon it. Agitation fills her as Suzanne, taking her to one side, whispers: “My dear, you had better leave the breakfast table before me. I have some business with Mr. Rosenbaum.

Keep away from every one of these gentlemen. I don't wish you to receive the attentions of anyone in the house; remember my words."

Recollecting Gaspard, the adopted daughter's eyes are not obedient; though she says diplomatically: "Yes, Madame, I shall permit the addresses of no gentleman *here*."

About this time she is rather pleased to observe that Mr. Rosenbaum seems disappointed about something. As the meal has progressed, he has glanced quite often towards the door as if expecting some one. There is but one vacant chair at the table, that of the bohemian; the new arrival occupying the place of De Millefleurs.

Apparently he is awaiting Ambigue in order to say or do something unpleasant, but this chance never comes.

While the others are eating, Monsieur Moliere Shakespeare Ambigue, taking advantage of their absence, is impatiently trying to get an interview with the actress upstairs. Though the noise of Gertrude's various suitors from the dining-room makes him grind his teeth, and the Comte de Pichoir's voice exclaiming, "*Ma chere*, Mademoiselle Hammond, a coronet would look charming on your classic brow," causes him to snarl like a terrier who sees another

dog eyeing his bone, the dramatist forces himself to keep away from the breakfast table, even though his appetite is good and his sweetheart's eyes grace the repast. With himself he is communing anxiously: "I must prevent this Daniel Webster Rosenbaum, who would apparently also make my Mignonette his victim, asserting his rights as the spouse of Armande. *Mon Dieu*, it would affect that grand actress's nerves so she would not be able to do justice to Calypso tonight." Here a further consideration sends an additional cold chill through the author. "Perhaps this fiend will claim her salary under his rights of husband. Then Armande will not act at all; and, *diable*, there is no understudy!" he moans. "In some way I must get the great artiste out of the house before the monster Rosenbaum recognizes his wife and knows her salary is within his avaricious clutch."

Alarmed by this idea, he runs up the stairway to the floor above and raps desperately on Armande's door.

"You can't come in now, Ambigue," shouts the actress, through the panel. "I am *en dishabille* and busy with my maid packing my trunks!"

"Packing her trunks!" he shudders. "The poor creature must also have discovered her pursuing husband is in the house." Therefore he commands cau-

tiously: "Don't wait to pack them. You must leave here instantly. I'll have a carriage at the street door!" His words are low and guarded, though every one is below in the dining-room. "You must not remain another minute. You must leave before they come upstairs. I'll be back here on the instant."

The agitation in his voice causes the actress to inquire nervously: "What do you fear?"

But Ambigue hasn't waited for her words and is already on his way to the front door. He darts into the Rue de Provence, from there rushes into the Rue de la Fayette, and very shortly returns with a cab.

Leaving this in waiting, he glides rapidly into Madame Perriqué's front door again. There is no one in the salons or hallways except Georgina, who, being disgusted with the lack of masculine attention her childish costume produces, has left the dining-room before the other guests. He suddenly reflects: "Little girls have tongues." Stepping to the adolescent Mrs. Horton, he astounds her by saying: "Petite, all children like sweets," pulls two lumps of sugar from his pocket and presses them into her hand. As she gasps in indignation, he chucks her affably under her dimpled chin and whispers: "Not a word as to Armande, little one; silence and discretion," and darts from her mysteriously up the stairs.

"Horrors, somebody will be dangling me on their knees next," half-sobs the juvenile matron. "What would Jack say if he had seen that?" She shakes her fist at the retreating Moliere and mutters: "For this I'll tell on you and Armande, sure!" then thinks sympathetically: "Oh, poor Gertrude—and this fickle wretch broke plates and blacked boots for her this morning."

But Ambigue, unaware of young Mrs. Horton's threats, is standing at the actress's door and rapping on it. It is immediately opened to him, and Armande de Millefleurs appears costumed for the street. She has made a hasty but effective toilette, though her cheeks are pale. In her hurry she has forgotten to put on the usual touch of rouge.

"The carriage is at the door, Mademoiselle de Millefleurs," whispers the author, an anxiety in his voice that frightens his listener. "I have my eye on an apartment that will suit you at No. 80 Rue de la Fayette."

"Yes; will you see that my maid brings my luggage with her after me?" The actress appears eager to go; her escort's manner convinces her he fears some outbreak for unpaid board from Madame Perriqué.

"Certainly," answers Ambigue, who, impressed by the lady's eagerness to depart, reflects: "Armande has

discovered her brutal husband is about to claim her. That's the reason she was packing her trunks to fly secretly." Then noting that La De Millefleurs is very nervous, the dramatist's blood runs cold as he ejaculates: "*Morbleu*, you are not going to be sick on the first night of my play. That would be too horrible!"

"An incident occurred this morning," murmurs Armande, "which affected my nerves."

"If agitation should prevent your acting to-night, I am a ruined author," he shudders, and supports her tenderly down the long stairway, while she, reclining in his arms, whispers: "Dear Ambigue, sweet Moliere, thanks for your kind attention. I don't know what I would have done without my young genius!"

"*Ciel*, by the way Armande clings to me, this actress knows from rehearsal my play will be a triumph!" cogitates the modest man of letters.

"Calm yourself, great artiste," he observes reassuringly. "Superb creature, grand actress, remember that my fate hangs on you to-night, and stiffen your magnificent spinal column. In your weak state, I shall take you in your cab to your new lodgings. I shall make all arrangements for you."

"Thank you," she says gratefully. "Please pay the cabman for me."

"Certainly; give me your pocketbook," answers

Ambigue briskly. "Otherwise the hackman would not be paid," he thinks sadly as he supports the fascinating Armande from the front door and places her carefully into the hack, stepping in beside her.

Consequently Georgina, who has seen a good deal and heard some of this, standing in the big empty salon and looking out of the window into the street, giggles maliciously: "Great thunder, isn't Ambigue sparking the actress?"

Then turning about and seeing Miss Hammond, who has taken advantage of Madame Perriqué's injunction to wander from the masculine compliments and attentions of the breakfast table, young Mrs. Horton calls: "Hi, Gertie, come here! Just take a peep and see him put her in her carriage."

"Who?" asks Miss Hammond, with the curiosity of youth.

"Ambigue! His old coat rips under the shoulder as he fairly lifts that stunning Armande de Millefleurs into the hack and arranges the skirts about her charming figure like a regular Don Cæsar de Bazan."

"I am not interested," remarks Miss Hammond, haughtily.

"But you ought to see Moliere. How gallantly, how lovingly he plays the cavalier—just like my Jack used to do to me." Peering out of the window, Geor-

gina doesn't notice that the young lady standing behind her grows extremely pale and puts a hand to a wildly beating heart. "Oh, jingo," she continues, excitedly, "he—he's getting into the carriage beside Armande!"

"No, no, impossible!" and Gertrude, refuting her own words, glides to the window and looks out to see a distracting sight.

"I knew curiosity would fetch you," giggles the young Mrs. Horton.

But the other, unheeding her, is shuddering to herself: "They are driving away together. Oh, in Paris this means so much—alone in a carriage with this actress—and he had just left my arms." For curiously, *tete-à-tete* carriage exercise in the French capital with a lady does indicate more intimate relations than in most other cities. Then trying to defend the man of her heart, she says to Georgina: "Monsieur Ambigue's attentions to the actress are not at all remarkable. As an author, he wishes to have her good will. She plays in his——." Here remembering Moliere's warning, Gertrude abruptly checks her words.

"Oh, trying to defend him, my poor Gertie." Young Mrs. Horton puts her arms around her more dignified companion.

"Poor Gertie!" echoes Miss Hammond, indignantly.

"Yes, I always sympathize with any girl when her chap does the right-about-face on her."

"What do you mean by your horrid slang?"

"Oh, I mean Ambigue is head over ears in love with this actress."

"Nonsense!"

"Yes he is. If my Jack treated me in that way——"

"Your Jack?"

"Yes—yes, my brother."

"Pish, your Jack is either not your brother or you're a greater fool about your brother than I ever saw a girl before," asserts Miss Hammond, made angry by the stings Georgina has inflicted both on her love and her pride.

"I am not such a noodle as you are!" retorts Georgina, sturdily. "Why, everyone in the house knows Ambigue is crazy about the great De Millefleurs."

"No, no!"

"Yes he is. You're too proud to listen or to look, but I'm not. I saw him only two minutes ago in the hall as he brought Armande down the stairs to the carriage, literally carrying her in his arms. She was saying to him: 'Dear Ambigue; sweet Moliere,' and

he was whispering: 'Grand actress, magnificent artiste.'" Here the narrator brings additional consternation and sorrow to Miss Hammond by asserting: "I heard Moliere tell Armande her backbone was the finest in the world. How did he know that?"

"Oh, my heaven!" shudders Gertie at this astounding and peculiar information.

"Have a little backbone yourself!" counsels Georgina, stoutly; for Miss Hammond has sunk into a chair.

Tears have come into Gertrude's brown eyes. She is abstractedly wiping them with the handkerchief Moliere had placed in her hand. Suddenly perceiving it is a lady's *mouchoir* and monogrammed "A. de M." she gasps: "And he had the audacity to wipe my eyes with her souvenir!" The lace trifle is thrown to the floor and stamped beneath Gertie's pretty feet.

"That's right, get good and angry. Now make your young man jealous, that's the proper way," whispers the youthful matron.

"Jealous!" sneers the tortured one, trying to appear indifferent. In her heart she knows she's too unhappy to think of making any one else unhappy.

"Well, that's the way to do it. That's the way I brought my Jack to terms," laughs Georgina. "Now he simply adores me."

"Stop torturing me," commands Miss Hammond, "or I'll tell Madame Perriqué what you say about your Jack, *a brother who is jealous.*"

But Georgina has run away shuddering. "Great Crystal Palace, don't tell her that! Don't tell her that!"

Looking after her, the bereft girl sighs: "Pish, it is not this child enrages me. It's my jealous love." But still tormenting herself, she sighs: "My Heaven, if he's untrue? I have given him all I have to give—my heart; and he—he breaks it. From the very clinging of my arms, he sprang up and called this actress's name. Now he's gone with her privately, secretly, alone, as lovers do in Paris. Oh, God forgive him!"

Overcome with the misery of Gaspard's perfidy, Miss Hammond sinks into a chair once more and tears again dim her bright eyes, though she wipes them with her own handkerchief.

CHAPTER VI.

I'VE LOST YOU—THAT IS THE END OF ME.

But Mr. Rosenbaum's and Madame Perriqué's business conference has for the moment deprived Miss Gertie of her new mother's prying eyes and watchful guardianship to prevent amatory attacks.

Miss Hammond is alarmed by a voice whispering: "*Ciel*, tears! Are they for me, dear one?" and finds her hands ardently assaulted by kisses from the young Comte de Pichoir.

She starts up astounded and indignant, but the young boulevardier, whose ethics are, "A woman alone is always a woman to be made love to," still holds her delicate white member. Despite her fluttering struggles, he observes complacently: "That's right. A proper modesty is always becoming in a young girl. Your diffidence has prevented you from thanking me personally for my present this morning, I presume. I noticed your guardian's eyes were on you all the time; but now we are alone I offer you, not only the heart, but the hand of the Comte de

Pichoir. My title dates from Louis the Eleventh. I move, not only in the court circle of the Empire, but in those of the ancient *noblesse* in the Faubourg Saint Germain. So, of course, you will consider none of the *parvenu* propositions of marriage from these *canaille*, whom I don't even dignify by the title of rivals. I offer you the honored name of Pichoir."

"Monsieur le Comte," answers Gertrude, plucking her hand from him and growing haughty at his persistence, "in your rank and class, I believe it is customary for the bride to furnish a dot. I have nothing. Even this poor dress is a present from Madame Perriqué."

"Ah, yes, I understand," observes the young man in mocking unbelief. "But you are an Americaine."

"Yet some Americans are poor," rejoins the girl, "and I am one of them."

"And like to be loved as poor," whispers Henri, thinking of the letter he has in his pocket. "Therefore, I tell you that I adore you, dear Mademoiselle. Pauper that you are, I worship you." He sinks upon his knee before her, and, seizing her hand again, despite her struggles, covers it with ardent kisses, for the maiden is so beautiful that passion makes the young fortune hunter forget even avarice.

But at this moment there is a hasty step behind

them. A strong hand is inserted in the collar of the kissing boulevardier. He is half dragged to his feet, then thrown into a chair. Between him and the young lady stands Ambigue, returned from placing Armande in her new lodging. To his sweetheart he remarks, reassuringly: "Have no fear, my Gertrude, from this fortune hunter."

"Fortune hunter!" stammers the astonished *demoiselle*.

But Moliere, not answering her, advances threateningly towards the scowling Count, and says: "When you address this young lady again, Monsieur, remember she has an affianced who will protect her."

"I will address you, sir," answers the young man, haughtily, "in another way. I am the Comte de Pichoir."

"Pish!" jeers the bohemian.

"I said Pich-oir," replies the noble, angrily.

"Waugh!" laughs Ambigue, merrily.

"Monsieur makes fun of me—but to-morrow morning in the Bois de Bolougne."

"*Mon Dieu!*" This is a sigh of terror from the frightened Gertrude.

"Before you challenge me, Monsieur le Comte," remarks Moliere, "ask The Elder Sarnac, with whom I fence in the Salle Lepelletier, what he thinks your chances will be of living."

"*Diable*, you cross swords with The Elder Sarnac?" mutters Pichoir, astounded.

"Yes; sometimes before the divine *L'homme Masqué* drives Paris crazy with his Ajax figure and unconquered wrestling. It is only a suggestion," grins the bohemian.

"But a noble like me cannot meet one of the bourgeoisie," replies the Count, in haughty reflection. Though he is not a coward, he doesn't particularly care to be spitted by this out-at-elbows fellow who is in the habit of crossing blades with The Elder Sarnac, a *maitre d'armes* famed as the deadliest swordsman in all Paris.

"Bourgeoisie!" breaks out the dramatist, enraged at this sneer in the presence of the being he adores. "The only low thing about me, Monsieur, is my pocket." The scribbler's bearing is that of the old regime. "You, a paltry Count, dare to turn up your nose at me. Before the Revolution, my family was ——." Ambigue's manner is now tremendous. Then he pauses and utters brokenly: "But, no, I'll not announce my title when I haven't a decent coat to my back. A prince should not stick his toes through the holes of his boots."

Monsieur Ambigue's grandiloquence is greeted by a chorus of laughter. In pursuit of Gertrude, have

entered a number of her admirers. The English sporting man guffaws: "A prince? Blow my eyes, he wears the clothes of a costermonger!"

But Rousette, who has come with them, laughs: "You mean the clothes of an author with an unproduced drama."

"Or that of a potentate who has lived in the slums so long he has forgotten his title," grins the Comte de Pichoir.

To this, Ambigue rejoins: "Every French nobleman isn't hunting American heiresses for their money."

This elicits another shriek of unbelieving laughter. Just about this time numerous titled protégés of the Empire have been eagerly seeking several American beauties with very large dowers.

Pride now vanquishes prudence; Ambigue breaks out: "But still to-morrow morning, if my play is a success I shall not be ashamed to proclaim my name!"

"Your play? Oho, *diable*, what play?" guffaws Rousette. "There is only one drama to be produced to-night, and that's at my theatre."

"'Tis my play that shall to-night make the fortune of your theatre!" observes Ambigue in modest prophecy.

"Thunder of God, the mountebank is crazy!" asserts the manager, and all laugh uproariously.

"Ah, grinning fiends, you doubt! If any of you poltroon fortune hunters dare——"

"Fortune hunters!" This is an exclamation from them all. They wonder how he guesses.

But he, unheeding them, cries: "Here, take my cards!" and pulls from his pocket a handsome *porte monnaie* embossed with a glittering monogram. "No, not this one," he laughs, "but this one," and producing a dilapidated pocketbook, throws it on the table: "Help yourselves, those who wish to cross swords with me. Sarnac will act as my second!"

Fortunately, Ambigue is too busy about his defiance to notice the cruel effect of the *porte monnaie*, which he now holds in his hand, upon his sweetheart. Miss Hammond notes its monogram, "A. de M.," in big gold letters, trembles, and with a reproachful sigh sinks overcome into a chair.

But this challenge in the presence of the girl whom all wish to win, makes the fortune hunters defiant. The Comte de Pichoir thrusts daintily his fingers into the dilapidated pocketbook. Gazing at it, he looks astounded, then grins: "*Diable*, this isn't a prince's card, but an author's ticket for your theatre to-night, Roussette."

"Blow my eyes, he's a rum one; so's mine!" guffaws the English betting man, who has grabbed another.

"*Mashallah!*" exclaims the Turk, "I'll use mine to-night. It's for a seat in the orchestra," and he puts it into his pocket.

To this, Paul, who has been inspecting the pasteboards placed under his eyes, suddenly ejaculates in a dazed voice: "Great Heavens, they are genuine. I issued these author's tickets to the Dramatic Society myself."

"*Morbleu*, if he's the author of the play that is produced anonymously to-night at your theatre, Rousette, we'll hiss it," says the Count, vindictively.

Here a new and very cruel element is introduced into the scene. Mr. Rosenbeaum, who has come quietly in from his conference with Madame Perriqué, followed by that lady, remarks in malicious craft: "Under the circumstances, it may *not* be necessary, Monsieur Rousette, to produce this aspiring gentleman's play at your theatre this evening."

"What the deuce do you mean?" asks the manager, eagerly.

"Your contract may not compel its *immediate* production," observes the lawyer, astutely.

Ambigue gasps for breath! A despair inflames his eyes, as Rousette, taking up the subtle suggestion, grins: "*Sacré bleu*, gentlemen, you shan't get your chance to hiss Calypso!"

"*Mon Dieu*, what do you mean?" Trembling in every limb, Moliere extends imploring hands.

"What do I mean?" says the manager in arrogant power. "I mean the other play is doing well enough. I'll keep the old one on. I'll verify this, and if *Ambigue* is the author, I'll postpone *Calypso* for a year. Under my contract I have that right."

"No, no; mercy!" The appearance of the dramatist proves he is the author of the play. He cries in piteous fright: "No, no, take pity on my play. Spare my one hope of success in life. *Rousette*, you are not cruel enough for that."

"Ain't I!" answers the manager in brutal sarcasm, as he departs to make certain at the Dramatic Authors' Society, thinking to himself: "I'll teach this scribbler to jostle me for the hand of an American heiress. For this, I'll postpone this scoundrel's play till he dies of starvation. He'll never get another drama on if it is known that on the day of production I suddenly refused to fulfill my contract until the very expiration of my time; other managers will think there is some hidden flaw in its construction or dialogue. In the dramatic business we all run in a bunch. The author one produces, the others produce. The author one refuses, the others refuse. This failure of production will be more disastrous to Am-

bigue than if his play had never been advertised upon the boulevards."

But this is only the beginning of misfortune to the unhappy dramatist. By the astute suggestion of Mr. Rosenbaum, his play is being destroyed; now he is about to be bereft of his sweetheart.

The men clustering about scowl savagely at him, for at threatened dramatic disaster, Miss Hammond has uttered some broken words of sympathy and turned tender eyes upon the faltering Gaspard, whose hand still holds the pocketbook of Armande de Mille-fleurs. Noting this, reproach replaces sympathy in the girl's brown orbs; reminded of the actress, they begin to sparkle indignantly. Miss Gertie has plenty of spirit and she is very angry at Gaspard's *amour* with another. This indignation is soon stimulated tremendously.

Grinning at the success of his crafty suggestion to the theatrical manager, the New Orleans lawyer now remarks to the gentlemen Rousette has left behind him: "I am pleased to think the arrogance of this scribbler will be chastised by the non-production of his play. But after what I shall announce to you, under the instruction and at the demand of Madame Perriqué——" Rosenbaum pauses to give effect to his words.

They already have a terrible potency on the landlady. Though she expects them, her knees knock together.

"You will soon agree with me, gentlemen," continues Daniel Webster, oratorically, "that you have a greater cause of animosity against him than his arrogance. Of course, it will brand you all as fortune hunters."

This suggestion is not received placidly. The Comte de Pichoir exclaims ferociously: "Monsieur!" the English bookmaker growls: "Damn yer impudence!" and a few, including the Turk and the Greek, expostulate threateningly, while the French officer from Mexico, who has just strolled in cries: "Madoiselle Hammond will not believe it of me, though I admit my adoration for her. For I have sworn to marry her! And you, sir, will prove your words or——"

The sabreur looks a nasty customer; though Rosenbaum's lips tremble, he says desperately: "I'll prove them! Each one of you has a letter addressed to Miss Alice Ballard." An expression of startled concern runs over their faces. "She was one of the old pupils of Madame Perriqué, who is entirely innocent in the matter——" he indicates the landlady, whose agitation is as great as that of any one in the room.

"Each epistle you gentlemen have in your pockets is signed Gertrude Eloise Hammond."

Here the young lady mentioned starts and gasps astoundedly: "WHAT!"

"It states," continues Daniel Webster, rapidly, "that Gertrude Hammond, who is very rich, but who is afraid of being pursued and married for her great American fortune, is of a romantic temperament. I think I've got the facts straight as a judge's charge to the jury, Madame Perriqué," he interjects, sarcastically.

"Oh, don't mention it in that awful way," shivers the landlady.

The Comte de Pichoir, with a muttered oath is fumbling in his pocket.

The others are too startled and disconcerted to give her much attention, so the lawyer goes rapidly on: "That Miss Gertrude Hammond being of a very romantic temperament, wishes to be loved for love only, and therefore will go to the boarding-house of Madame Perriqué, her old school teacher, of Number 37 Rue de Provence, and pretend to be very poor so that some Adonis of the boulevards may adore her for herself and not her money. It is signed Gertrude Eloise Hammond."

"Gertrude Eloise Hammond!" cries that young

lady, starting up. "Good heavens, who has dared to use my name for such a fraud."

"Fraud!" growls the English bookmaker, pulling out his letter with Anglo-Saxon directness. This he shoves under the agitated maid's eyes and demands: "Your handwriting?"

"No," answers the girl. "That isn't my signature. It's an outrageous forgery! Besides, I'm poor—poor as the birds who pick their living from the grass of the Champs Elysée. Poor to starvation—you saw me when I came in helpless to Madame Perriqué's protecting arms that night from the streets of Paris."

"Yes, Gertie, it was a cruel thing!" falters the landlady, who wishes to appear as innocent as possible, and is now more anxious than ever to retain Miss Hammond's confidence. "As soon as I discovered it, I directed Mr. Rosenbaum to explain."

"And who used my name for this degrading conspiracy?" Miss Hammond's spirit is in her eyes. She stands like an outraged goddess. Ambigue shudders as he looks upon the haughty indignation in the face he loves.

"We will show you that in a minute, my dear young lady," observes Rosenbaum, briskly, "if these gentlemen will but keep quiet."

For the dupes producing their letters are compar-

ing them, uttering exclamations of rage. "The epistles are all alike," asserts the Count. "We have all been done, gentlemen."

This is assented to by a savage "*Bishmillah!*" from the Turk.

"Beware of the law, Madame Perriqué!" threatens the French officer, ferociously.

But the New Orleans advocate defends the trembling landlady, remarking soothingly: "The law will not touch this innocent woman. Neither is she assailable by you, not having written the letters and knowing nothing of them until she saw their peculiar effect upon you fortune hunters. A monster invented that ruse. By it he thought to gain his miserable bread! For when his bill was sent him by his innocent and unfortunate landlady, he turned upon her and threatened her with exposure. Madame Perriqué is as much this adroit trickster's victim as you are, gentlemen." Rosenbaum's cat-like eyes turn upon the unfortunate Ambigue.

A good deal of the first part of this has been wasted upon the bohemian, who has been reduced to a sort of coma by the cruel accident to his play. Ambigue now awakes, and, being of fighting metal, retorts vindictively: "A monster is now addressing *me!* You are a monster. You stand in the presence

of one victim, the other I have aided to fly from you."

"Ah, you confess to those letters!" cries Daniel Webster, not permitting the conversation to linger on himself. "You, by writing those letters, you—Moliere Shakespeare Ambigue—have made this sweet girl, in her innocence, the bait for this crowd of fortune hunters. You tricked all these men to come here by these forged epistles, bearing the name of innocence, beauty—and poverty!"

A growl of rage and muttered threats arise from the surrounding men; but over their anathemas is heard the horrified voice of Miss Hammond.

"No, no!" she screams. "I can't believe—Gaspard—I can't believe!" Then her tone is low in sad entreaty. "You couldn't have done this dastard thing with the name of one you pretend to adore."

"Pretend? I *do* adore!" The bohemian would approach her to plead with her, but she, holding up warning hand, says proudly: "Then, of course, you didn't invent those letters that have made these men pursue me with protestations of love and desire!"

Her sweetheart cannot answer the reproach in her eyes, and hangs his head before the indignant anguish of his Mignonette.

"Tell me, in the name of manhood," she implores,

"have you made me the lure for these wretches," for the appearance of Madame Perriqué's boarders as they compare their letters and utter execrations justifies her term.

"I——" Moliere's voice is very faint; then suddenly he droops his head, and murmurs: "Alas! I did."

"Oh, shame!" shudders Gertrude, and staggers from him.

"But innocently!" he half shrieks. "Till I saw you the blessed night you came in that door helpless, I only knew that I loved one whom I had christened Mignonette."

"Then how did you obtain my true name?"

"From the roll book of Madame Perkins' boarding-school stored up in the garret where I live with the rats."

This mention of the privations, poverty and loneliness of the once dashing Gaspard produces a tender flutter in the heart of Mignonette. "Oh, how I would like to believe you," she sighs. Perhaps she might forgive him, but, seeing Armande's pocketbook in his hand, she murmurs in broken voice: "There are other things! Oh, Heavens, that actress, the De Millefleurs."

"Of course! He had assignations with her!" observes Madame Perriqué, severely.

"He's enamored of her spinal column!" asserts Georgina, who has stolen in from the outerhall, from which she has been enjoying the fracas.

"False in one, false in all. Good-bye!" Miss Hammond turns haughtily away.

Gazing upon her, the dramatist mutters in morose philosophy: "Ah, fickle, fickle, fickle! And yet you would not be a woman unless you were fickle!"

"Fickle," cries the girl, "when——" Indignation blazes in her eyes.

"Don't listen to him, Gertie," says young Mrs. Horton, vindictively, remembering the chuck under the chin. "I saw him have Armande in his arms and she caressed him and called him 'dear Ambigue' and 'sweet Moliere!'"

"Bah, baby! 'twas but the innocent embrace of grand actress to great author," mutters Moliere, ferociously.

A mocking jeer from the assembly greets this.

With an unbelieving, melancholy sigh, Miss Hammond turns to Madame Perriqué and whispers: "Take me from the room. These men's faces make me ashamed—this man's most of all."

"You won't believe!" This is a cry from Ambigue's breaking heart.

"How can I when, with the words of love to me

on your very lips, you sprang from my side to take this actress surreptitiously to her new lodgings; when now you come back even carrying her purse. I don't pretend to be a woman of the world," falters Gertrude, "but I know enough to make me doubt the love I thought was mine."

"I warn you!" cries her lover, in affrighted voice, "I warn you! This man who has persecuted you, who has made you starve in Paris, has your guardian's ear——"

His oration is interrupted by Alphonse coming hurriedly in and giving into Ambigue's hand a paper, saying: "From the manager of the Theatre Cluny."

A shudder racks the dramatist's frame. The last straw has fallen upon Moliere Shakespeare Ambigue. He bows his head and laughs jeeringly: "It never showers but it rains. It is from Rousette. My play is postponed for a year. I'll starve to death before that time! It is his right under the contract; the revenge of the manager."

The agony in the voice she still loves is so startling that Miss Hammond, who is being supported from the room by her new mother, suddenly turns and gasps: "Oh, Ambigue, your destroyed play!"

"Oh, that's a mere trifle, a bagatelle, a nothing!" scoffs the bohemian, with a yellow laugh. "I have

lost your love, Mignonette; I have lost *you*! What else matters to Ambigue, the bohemian. If you trust this man more than me," he points to the suave Rosenbaum, "take him; let him guard you! If you trust that woman," his finger is directed to Perriqué, "more than me, let her guide your way in life. But there will be no heart wish you greater good, grander happiness and more supreme joy than that of Moliere Shakespeare Ambigue, who to-night had hoped to be a man of fame, successful in his play and happy in his love, but who is again a penny-a-liner, slaving to keep body and soul together, and wishing body and soul were divorced because he has a broken heart. I've lost you! I have lost you! That's the end of me!"

He dashes from the room and out of the house.

His despair has softened the haughty heart of Mignonette; she struggles from Madame Perriqué and calls faintly, "Gaspard!"

Then, as the front door closes with an awful bang, she falls half-swooning into the arms of the woman who now has over her the authority of mother, and is prepared to grimly and austere assert it.

CHAPTER VII.

MISS GERTIE VISITS THE AMERICAN CONSUL.

The door closing on Ambigue has a very pleasing sound to the crafty Rosenbaum. At the noise he winks his eye and favors himself with this astounding observation: "By gum, I've won her—and her fortune, too!"

Almost immediately after this, Madame Perriqué wisely leads her adopted ward to her bedroom. The sight of the snarling throng seems to cover with unutterable shame the young lady who had been their lure. Their hostess is also by no means sorry to escape from contact with her guests, for nearly all of her boarders are demanding the return of a portion of the exorbitant prices exacted from them.

After another short business interview with his hostess, the lawyer, coming downstairs, announces to her guests that in her trouble their landlady has engaged him to act for her legally. With this he goes about among Perriqué's growling boarders trying to show them all how helpless they are in the matter and

occasionally, in strict confidence, paying grudgingly to the more threatening a portion of their demands. Though the officer from Mexico, who is a very nasty fellow, makes such ferocious threats to Mr. Rosenbaum, that he is compelled to practically return him all the money he had expended in Madame Perriqué's house, a very extraordinary transaction, as Rosenbaum doesn't usually liquidate other people's financial obligations.

Already a good many of the dupes are going gloomily away, though a few, anxious to get the worth of their money, will remain till their terms of lodging have expired.

"We will have all these scalawags out in a day or two," thinks the lawyer, contentedly. "Appreciating the poor figure they would cut in court and how they would be ridiculed in the journals, these lambs will be very dumb under their shearing. In a little time, Madame Perriqué, using her authority as her mother, will, French fashion, give the girl to me as my bride, and then——." Mr. Rosenbaum's eyes flash through his glasses. Miss Hammond's blushes and confusion during the last pathetic scene have increased her ethereal loveliness to his gloating eyes. "It will not only be booty, but beauty!" fervidly thinks this legal buccaneer, an expression dominating his face, which,

did Gertie but see it, would add to her embarrassed shame.

But Rosenbaum's thoughts are not all *couleur de rose*. The landlady's naturally suspicious temperament has been increased by a life of hard experience. To obtain her co-operation, the lawyer has been compelled to make her certain explanations and to promise definitely to her a considerable fixed sum upon, as he expresses it, "the delivery of the goods." Madame Perriqué being no fool, this has been practically unavoidable, though Rosenbaum doesn't like it. He would have vastly preferred to have kept a secret pertaining to Miss Hammond entirely in his possession until he could whisper it to his bride with a husband's authoritative voice. Still, with considerable confidence he cogitates: "Perriqué shall establish her boarding-school again. Under academic discipline, it will seem perfectly natural and also be extremely easy for her legal mother to seclude my Gertrude from all masculine attentions till she is put into her nuptial dress and turned over to yours truly."

In this astute scheme, the lawyer would probably be successful; but to prove his ability to carry out his promise of liquidating Madame Perriqué's lease of the big house in the Rue de Provence, he had been compelled to show where the ready money will come

from to the landlady, who had, notwithstanding his threats of exposure, at first scoffed at and refused his plan. This he had only been able to do by revealing to her that certain moderate funds had been forwarded to the American Consul in Paris for Miss Hammond's use.

"All you have got to do is, in a few days, to obtain your daughter's signature to an order for this money. Then I will collect it for you, and you can credit it to me on account of what I have promised you," he has advised. "Having the authority of Miss Hammond's legal mother, that will not be difficult for you to do."

At first, Madame Perriqué had not believed Rosenbaum's assertion that money was coming to this girl, who had wandered to her starving from the streets of Paris. To convince her the lawyer had been compelled to exhibit documents he didn't wish to show. But once assured of the fact that her adopted daughter had funds due to her, Suzanne had answered promptly: "Don't fear, I'll get Gertrude's signature. Her only waywardness up to this time has been her deceitful passion for this beggarly scribbler, whom she has now discarded. My charity to her has produced her love and confidence. I have no doubt of her obedience. But if not"—Madame Perriqué's face

is that of the stern schoolmistress—"I'll take another way with her."

With this she departs to interview her adopted daughter, hoping to find her lovely charge in such dejection she will be very pliable.

Relieved of the shame of enduring the glances of the crowd of scalawags who had been duped by the forged letters bearing her name, Miss Hammond, in the seclusion of her little bedroom, would be in better spirits, did not Ambigue's miserable fate appall her: She has youth and health, and Gaspard's last kiss upon her lips had been most passionate! She begins to reflect on the light-hearted lover of her school days. "The poor fellow didn't know my name when he forged those letters," she thinks, "consequently he is innocent of intentionally degrading me.

"Since I came here a morose shame has at times contorted his noble face when he has seen the persistency of these miserable creatures in their attempts upon my heart. His attentions to Armande might even have been those of an author anxious to secure the good will of the artiste who plays the leading role in his drama to-night. But that will never be!" she sighs. "The villainous theatrical manager jealous of the poor author, because I, the putative American heiress smiled on him, has destroyed Gaspard's play!

The play that was to give him fame and gain him money enough to marry me! Alas, that's nonsense now—there is no hope for either of us! Yet, oh, it was Heaven. How radiant his face used to be when he kissed the violets and threw them to me in the Rue du Rocher."

She is so distressed about Ambigue, she thinks not of Rosenbaum, though he is shortly brought forcibly to her mind by the entry of Madame Perriqué from consultation with the lawyer. Coming to the little bedroom where the girl sits despondently, the landlady says in relieved tones: "Two-thirds of the scoundrels are already getting out. They will trouble you no longer, my poor Gertie. Good riddance to bad rubbish. After all is over, I shall again open my school in Paris. In its academic seclusion, my dear child, you will be apart from the attentions of *all* aspiring gallants." The new mother's tone is very maternal. She places a protecting arm about her adopted daughter's slight waist.

This prospective dearth of gallants doesn't seem to delight Miss Gerttrude as much as it should. Ambigue's kisses still pleasure her lips and the thought that there will be no more of them makes her downhearted. Tears suffuse her eyes and she responds in listless melancholy: "I don't care much what you do

with me, Madame Perriqué; I'm—I'm tired of everything."

"Ah, but we will have hopes," says the landlady, encouragingly. "Some day, in the future, I will select a husband for you. Don't think such beauty as yours will be allowed to blush unseen always, my sweet one."

Madame Perriqué kisses her effusively, but Gertrude murmurs petulantly: "I want no other lovers!" then sighs: "I've—I've had enough of them."

"Yes, untrue to you in the first moment of his protestations. Think no more of Gaspard! For that reason we'll move as soon as possible from this house."

Here the eager avarice of Perriqué's disposition produces an untoward complication in the astute plot of Daniel Webster Rosenbaum. She speaks before he planned she should.

Thinking that the girl will be very docile in this first moment of dejection at Ambigue's unfaith, the new mother whispers to her adopted daughter: "This loss of my boarding-house has been a severe financial blow to me. Therefore, I am sure, my dear child, you will not object to contribute to your maintenance."

"Certainly not, Madame Perriqué; I'll work hard for you in your school," answers the girl, eagerly.

"Oh, that will not be necessary. I shall demand only your duty and obedience. But there are some few dollars that await you at the American Consul's."

"Impossible!" exclaims the young lady.

"Yes, they came from your uncle in California."

"Oh, God bless him—he thought of me at last!"

"It is but a trifle," remarks Madame Perriqué, to whom Rosenbaum has not imparted the whole truth. "I will have the document necessary for me to obtain it drawn up and you will sign it as a daughter would for a mother."

"I will," replies the girl, instantly and gratefully, delighted to be able to aid the woman who has in her extremity given her protection and a home.

"Thank you, my sweet child!"

And Madame Perriqué, giving Gertie a maternal buss, goes away smilingly to prepare the document.

But when she returns, some quarter of an hour afterwards, she is astounded to find the room empty. Looking about the half-empty house among her few remaining guests, who regard her with no pleasant eyes, she discovers not only her adopted daughter absent, but that neither Alphonse nor Georgina is in the salons or hallway.

Suzanne is more annoyed than alarmed at this.

The two girls have probably gone for a stroll in the nearby Parc de Monceau.

She meditates: "Gertrude was doubtless anxious to get away from the few men left in my house, and Georgina has the English pedestrian habit. I am glad they took Alphonse to guard them. No wonder he was ready to go. Instead of giving him tips, the departing dupes have favored the poor *garçon* with curses, and that awful Englishman threatened to 'hand him one on the knob.' But still these runnings-out must cease, and when I get Gertie into school again, I'll give the minx enough lessons to keep her nose glued to her exercise book. I hope the American Consul has enough to start my boarding-school well." For no thought of more than a moderate amount of cash coming into her hands through her adopted daughter is in Madame Perriqué's imagination. Mr. Rosenbaum hasn't dared to tell his avaricious *confrère* what mighty hopes he has in regard to Miss Gertrude Hammond.

Consequently meeting the smiling lawyer in her hallway, Suzanne simply says that Gertie and Georgina have gone for a walk; and with the document ready for Miss Hammond's signature, she awaits the return of her adopted daughter.

But Madame Perriqué would be perturbed if she knew what had really happened.

For a short moment after her guardian had left her, Miss Hammond meditated gratefully on the faraway uncle in the distant land of gold. Suddenly she starts up! "Ambigue is starving!" she shudders. "He is in despair at the non-production of his drama." Then hope flies into her face; she reflects: "A little money would give him the chance to again fight the battle of life—a little money would perhaps keep him from suicide. I'll go to the American Consul and get my few dollars myself. Gaspard shall have some of them. Perhaps, also, there will be a letter from my uncle with words of encouragement for me, who, he must now know, is bereft of all near relatives but him."

She has no money to hire a cab; but she rings the bell and Alphonse runs up very readily from the hall below, for the departing boarders are answering his implorings for *pour boires* in a manner that makes the *garçon* fear for his personal safety.

To the waiter Gertrude says: "Alphonse, will you lend me money enough to take me to the American Consul's?"

The *garçon* looks astounded at her. He doesn't like to lend his hard-earned francs; but, made affable by her beauty and distress, he says promptly: "Yes, Mademoiselle; I can get a cheap cab."

"You can go with me now to the American Consul's. There I shall receive some money, and I can pay you," remarks the girl.

"Ah, money; that is good. From where?"

"From America. And for that reason, ask Georgina to come here. She can identify me," replies Miss Hammond.

To her Georgina dashes up the stairs, muttering, tearfully: "Why doesn't Jack come to save me from insult?"

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Matter! Be—because I asked that Rosenbaum who was the other victim that Ambigue said was flying from him, he growled at me: 'Keep a dumb tongue, child, or I'll tell Madame Perriqué on you. Reckon she don't think you over the spanking age.' Oh, Gerty, he said that to me. Goodness, why doesn't Jack come and get me into long dresses. I haven't the money to send a telegram to him."

"I will have in a few minutes, if you will go with me to the American Consul's," half laughs Miss Hammond. Though she has no idea how much awaits her, she knows there is some, and a little money seems a big thing to one who has been penniless so long.

Whereupon, the two girls hastily throw on their

wraps, and, Perriqué being busy with the legal document, they glide out into the street under Alphonse's escort. They trip hastily to the Rue de la Fayette, step into a *voiture*, and are driven off to the office of the American Consul in Paris, an official to whom Miss Hammond should have applied when first misfortune ascended upon her in the French capital, for no American girl in a strange land has a better and more powerful friend than her own Government, if she but knew it.

Upon reaching the headquarters of the commercial agent of the United States in France and mentioning her name, Miss Hammond is almost immediately shown with some impressment into the private office of the American Consul-General, to receive at first sorrow and then to find the world at her feet.

She is greeted most affably by the representative of beneficent Uncle Sam, who says: "I had expected you, my dear Miss Hammond, weeks ago. I should have asked the assistance of the *Bureau de Sûreté* to find your residence, but the matter was left in the hands of a New Orleans lawyer, who stated that he represented your interests, and had means of finding your address and communicating with you in Paris. He has some letters in his possession that indicate he knew your father in Mississippi, and also that he had

some correspondence from your late uncle in California."

"My *late* uncle!" ejaculates the girl.

"Yes. I—I presumed you knew of his death, which occurred several months ago."

Overcome, Gertrude sobs: "He was the only one left to me. I have never seen him in my life. He was my father's brother, Joseph Prevost Hammond."

"Yes; that's the name," remarks the Consul, assisting the weeping girl to a chair. "I fear the news has been a shock to you. I hope you have not suffered any inconvenience."

Then, noting the simplicity, almost to poverty, of the lady's costume, Miss Gertie being satisfactorily identified to him, both by certain information that she gives him that would probably be known only to a member of her family, and also by Alphonse and the juvenile Mrs. Horton, who states that they have been schoolgirls together, the commercial representative of Uncle Sam, taking her upon one side, addresses her immediately on business subjects.

His information is so astounding, Miss Hammond gazes upon him, dazed, unbelieving, trembling. Finally, as if to test his words, she asks, eagerly:

"Can I have some of this money at once?"

"Certainly; the banks will not close until three.

“Would you like it by check, or shall I send and get you the bills?”

“The bills, please.”

“How much?”

“Ten thousand francs!” she falters, as if affrighted by the immensity of her demand.

“You shall have them in five minutes!”

“Oh, is it real?” The girl presses her hands to her brow as if astonishment had made her dizzy. Then, suddenly, she whispers: “Oh, God, I thank thee!” and her sweet face becomes illuminated with such a divine light, the Consul, who has seen many a lovely woman in his day, thinks the young lady before him is the most beautiful of them all; for into her mind has sprung: “By this, I can do a *great thing* for Ambigue!”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE THEATRE CLUNY.

Then, after another hurried, but pertinent and astounding conversation, the Consul giving her some forcible, yet astute, advice in regard to her relationship to Madame Perriqué, and stating that he will do himself the honor to call upon her on the morrow, Miss Gertrude Hammond, of Mississippi, is escorted from the office of Uncle Sam's representative, and placed deferentially in her rickety cab beside the wondering Georgina, by a New York *attaché* of exquisite raiment and Fifth Avenue air.

Gazing at the pretty Americaine, this dandy reflects: "Put her in a decent gown, and, by Jove, she'd do for Washington Square or University Place." Though there are tears in her eyes, the divine radiance has not left the girl's face.

Gazing after the cab from his office, the Consul-General remarks, *sotto voce*: "I've met to-day about the sweetest girl I've ever seen, and have been introduced by her to as wily and crafty a scoundrel as ever

disgraced the American bar, and I've encountered a few hummers."

In the *voiture*, Miss Hammond astounds Alphonse, who is about to order the driver to go back to Madame Perriqué's, by producing a roll of *billets de banque* of such denominations and numbers they nearly make the waiter faint. To him she whispers: "Drive at once to the Boulevard Saint Germain, on the opposite side to number seventy-one."

"Number seventy-one! Why, that's the Theatre Cluny."

"Yes; I must get there as quickly as possible."

Arriving at her destination, she obtains from a nearby stationery shop a piece of paper, and hastily writes two lines upon it. This she hands with more than half of her banknotes to Alphonse, and directs: "Get Rousette's receipt for the money and the contract as I explained it to you."

"I—I understand, Mademoiselle. Six thousand francs! *Mon Dieu*, you are an angel!" gasps the astounded waiter. "I was once of the *clacque* at the Gymnase. I know about theatrical matters."

"Take the receipt in Ambigue's name; that's the surest."

"I will, Mademoiselle."

"You think Rousette will do it?" she queries, anxiously.

"Do it! What manager could resist a certain guarantee? Do it! I will bet already Rousette is repenting throwing away the chances of a drama he thinks will be a grand success. Perhaps even now Armande de Millefleurs is imploring him, and swearing she will not act in anything except Calypso on this night. You know she——"

"Yes, I know she——," shudders the girl, and cowers down brokenly, in the carriage, as Alphonse goes on his mission. But Georgina pats her on the shoulder, and says: "Keep up! With all those bank bills in your hand—oh, Gertie, you haven't got any bonbons yet, and I'm starving for them."

"No; but we will buy some now," whispers Gertie, sadly. "Some people shall be happy."

"Then you will lend me money to telegraph Jack to come on quick to take me away. I couldn't stay there if you left your new mother," observes Georgina, as, with a banknote in her hand, she dashes from the cab to indulge in bonbons and send her Jack an imploring dispatch.

Alone in the cab, Miss Gertie shudders: "My new mother! That's my complication now—my *legal* mother, and that villain Rosenbaum!"

A few minutes later young Mrs. Horton returns to the hack, and says, as well as she can with a mouth

full of sweets: "Gertrude, how your eyes are flashing!"

"Are they?" answers Miss Hammond. "I was thinking of a scoundrel."

Georgina knows she doesn't refer to the dramatist, for when Alphonse, some ten minutes later, comes across the street from the Theatre Cluny to their carriage, and hands Gertrude a document, her face grows sadly tender. After reading it very carefully, and inspecting the signature, she queries, anxiously: "What did Rousette say to the money?"

"*Diable!* at first he thought the money was counterfeit," grins the waiter, "and tested the bills with a magnifying glass. He couldn't understand how Ambigue had raised any such sum. Then the manager scratched his head, and laughed: 'I suppose the fellow must have obtained it from Armande. She may have put her jewelry in hock for this affair. She's crazy to play the part.'"

To this Miss Hammond cries out, mentally: "Thank God, I, not she, have given him his opportunity!" Then, almost tearfully, she directs: "Alphonse, you must find Ambigue, and tell him—tell him the good news."

"I'll find him," asserts the waiter. "Thanks, Mademoiselle," for she has pressed a hundred-franc bill into his hands. "You are too generous."

"No; it is nothing."

"Nothing? *Diable*, one would think you were an heiress. Oh, Madame Perriqué will be happy when she knows you have so much money. Best not throw it all away," he adds, grimly, "you'll need some of it to make your peace with her."

These remarks about her legal mother make Miss Hammond cautious. The two girls deposit Alphonse where he declares he can quickly put his eyes upon the bohemian, and, though Georgina purchases some more bonbons, they return almost immediately to the house of their guardian.

Here they are met at the door by the ex-school-mistress, who says anxiously: "Where have you been ——" she was going to say "hussies," but she changes it to "darlings."

"In the Bois de Boulogne for a drive."

"What, with no money! How do you suppose I can afford to pay that man?"

"Oh, with the funds you will get from the American Consul for me," answers Miss Hammond, pinching Georgina, to prevent her giving a mocking snicker.

"Yes; the document is ready for your signature, my child," observes Madame Perriqué, and urbanely pays the hackman, while Gertrude, cramming her

hand into her pocket to be sure the moiety of her roll of bills is still there, and scarce believing her senses, which have been, not only very much astounded, but also shocked, goes upstairs, and in her chamber begins to sob: "My uncle in California! Though I had never seen him, dying, he thought of me—he thought of me. He has given me a chance in life, a chance to be happy." Then she starts up, and falters: "Oh, if Alphonse doesn't find him!" next mutters, hoarsely: "But Alphonse must find Ambigue! He is despairing and in want, and I—I have the world at my feet." These reflections lead her to Armande de Millefleurs. She wrings her hands, and sighs: "She is so beautiful, she is so talented, she is so great—this actress, who will play in his grand drama to-night."

This conflict of the emotions doesn't produce much appetite. As time runs on Gertrude becomes anxious for the return of Alphonse with news of the bohemian. The last hours of daylight seem interminable. Three times she takes the banknotes from her pocket and bites her pretty fingers, to be certain she is awake.

Madame Perriqué, sure her ward is beneath her roof, gives her little attention, being occupied with Mr. Rosenbaum in "squaring," as he expresses it, the last of her boarders.

Soon, fortunately, Gertrude is distracted from her own affairs by Georgina's prattle. Young Mrs. Horton comes in to her, and, gazing at her, says, penitently: "I'm sorry, Gertie. I wouldn't have told you about Ambigue and the actress, had I known you were so crumpled on him. But what I told you was the truth," she adds, stoutly. "He did say Armande had a magnificent backbone."

"Pish, child, what do you know about such matters!" cries Gaspard's sweetheart, haughtily.

"Child!" answers Georgina, savagely and impulsively. "I am tired of being called *child*. Despite these infamous short skirts, I have been a married woman for three weeks."

"Good heavens, tell me!" ejaculates Miss Hammond, scarce believing her ears. But receiving complete confession, the tale of honeymoon woes from the adolescent Mrs. Horton is, fortunately, sufficient-astounding to divert Gertrude's mind for a little time from her own social problem.

But Alphonse doesn't come, and evening does. Her new mother bustles in to her adopted daughter's room and says: "Did you see anything of that wretched *garçon* before you left, Gertie? He hasn't returned. There will be no one to wait upon my few remaining guests. I have discharged my other dining-room servants."

"Alphonse not yet come?" falters Miss Hammond, and goes about the house, looking for him with such diligence that Madame Perriqué remarks to Rosenbaum: "She is very docile. She does everything I tell her. We will have no trouble with her whatsoever. She feels for my poverty so greatly, I do not think she will even eat very much. She has said she did not care to come down to dinner. I'll have a few trifles sent up to her when Alphonse comes."

A moment after Alphonse does come it, his eye perturbed, his manner absent-minded. He waits upon the table in a slipshod way, and then sympathetically carries up their little dinner to Miss Hammond and Georgina.

The moment he is in the room, Miss Hammond is questioning him: "What did Moliere say? Did he express gratitude? Did he express——"

"He expressed nothing. I have not seen Ambigue. Nobody knows what has become of him," answers the waiter, trying to keep concern out of his voice.

"Then he must have heard! He must be at the theatre! Rousette has probably notified him!" These are excited ejaculations from Gertrude. To them she adds, suddenly: "Alphonse, you—you don't think anything has happened to him?"

"No; I don't think!"

"But you *fear*?" The girl's face is very pale.

"No; I don't fear!" says Alphonse, seeing that Miss Hammond's spirits must be sustained. "He is probably at the theatre."

"Then we must go. You must get a box!"

"Get a box! Take me!" cries Georgina, who has been listening eagerly. "I'll chaperone you," giggles the youthful matron into Gertie's ear. "It's all perfectly proper; I'm a married woman," she adds, attempting a playful dignity.

"Then you'll have to sneak out or Perriqué won't allow you to go," observes the waiter. "I am inclined to think, from what I heard her say to Monsieur Rosenbaum at the dining-table, she values you very highly, Mademoiselle Hammond!"

He departs to see if the coast is clear, and the two girls make a hasty toilette; Gertie has only the cheap muslin gown and the chaperone is pouting: "With this atrociously short frock, thank God, I've got silk stockings!"

Alphonse is awaiting them in the hallway, when misfortune descends upon them in the form of Madame Perriqué. She puts her head into the bedroom, and says: "Did you have a good dinner, girls? Gertrude, I picked out for you the mutton chops you like so much."

"Yes, Madame Perriqué."

"I shall be engaged with Mr. Rosenbaum some little further time. Best remain in your room, my pets. I know, my daughter, you do not wish to see any of the wretches who formerly persecuted you—and there are a few of them left."

"Yes, Madame," replies Miss Hammond, demurely, though Georgina can scarcely restrain a laugh.

"When I come back, I shall expect to find that document signed."

"Yes, Madame."

"It is a mere form. You have very little money at the Consul's."

"Yes, Madame."

"Mr. Rosenbaum will collect it for me."

"Yes, Madame." Fighting with herself to keep her tongue at this formula, Miss Hammond's eyes sparkle menacingly. Fortunately, Madame Perriqué soon leaves the room, or there would be a *dénouement* then.

Three minutes after, the girls have glided down the stairs to Alphonse, who whispers: "Not the front door. The noise would catch Perriqué's ear. This way—" and leads them to the servants' exit, from which they issue, cloaked and hooded, into the winter street.

But Miss Hammond had a pocketful of bills. They catch a *voiture* almost immediately on the Rue de la Fayette, and are driven across the Pont au Change and Pont St. Michel, to the opposite side of the river, where they soon reach the Boulevard Saint Germain, and pause in the wide thoroughfare among a little cluster of carriages in front of the Theatre Cluny.

The theatre's doors are admitting quite a number of people. Georgina utters an exclamation of delight. "It's all right!" she whispers. "Calypso is on the billboards at the entrance."

"And, oh, Ambigue's name is attached to the drama!" exclaims Gertrude. "It is no more anonymous. He must be here in the theatre." Miss Hammond's eyes are bright with hope and love.

A moment later, the adroit waiter, who for the occasion has donned his dress-suit and succeeded in giving himself the appearance of an alert counter-jumper, asks: "Shall I use the author's tickets? Ambigue left his pocketbook behind him, and I have it in my coat."

"No, no; the best box in the house!" whispers Gertrude. "I want the receipts to be big." She slips a hundred-franc bill into the waiter's hand.

"*Diable*, you spend money as if you were a real American heiress," he grins, and, stepping up to the

box-office, around which there is already quite a concourse, secures a first tier stage box.

"Do you know the *loge* set aside for the author?" whispers Gertrude, as he obtains some programmes for them and they step up the stairs.

"Yes, Mademoiselle; I will point it out to you. Everything is going very well. The title has attracted the students of the Quartier. It indicates something naughty," grins the *garçon*, as he discreetly takes a seat at the rear of the box, and during most of the performance leaves the ladies to themselves.

Watching the audience gradually accumulate, Georgina comments upon them vivaciously: "There's an Englishman who looks something like my Jack in the orchestra, right behind the bald-headed man. Mercy, ain't they flocking in! A regular hodge-podge of a crowd. Don't sit so far in front of the box, Gertie. There's a handsome-looking fellow in the first balcony—I know he's an artist—trying to catch your eye. And there's the Count de Pichoir and Hadji Pacha, and some more of your old admirers," she giggles, "using poor Ambigue's tickets they had received as cards of defiance. For first-class economy, give me Parisians!"

Miss Hammond does not reply to these effusions, except by modestly withdrawing further from the

general gaze. But all the time she is growing more and more elated at the number of people pouring into the theatre. She now feels as much interested in the success of the drama as if she were Ambigüe himself. She thinks: "I did this for him. This is *my* production, not Rousette's," and is delighted that the little theatre is now nearly full; though its audience is not the concourse usual to the grand theatres of the main part of Paris, being quaint, bohemian and artistic, in accordance with its surroundings.

For this little playhouse is across the river, and attracts its own clientele of bloused workingmen and *petite bourgeoisie* to its upper galleries. Wine merchants from the convenient Halls aux Vines, the shopkeepers of the neighborhood, and sometimes cadets of the old *noblesse*, who still inhabit their ancient hotels in the Faubourg Saint Germain, pass their evenings in its lower balconies, orchestra and boxes; but, in addition, are always a lot of students from the neighboring Quartier Latin, and a smattering of artists from the nearby Luxembourg. These give considerable weight to its first night verdicts, which they express with an *élan* and vigor peculiar to bohemian Paris.

This evening, also, there is an unusual sprinkling

of men about town, who have journeyed from the fashionable *cafés* of the main boulevards; also a few officers in the uniforms of the Paris garrison. These are inveterate first nighters, who have come to see the new play, as this is the only production announced for this evening. For the same reason, a number of leading *feuilletonistes* and some of the most distinguished critics of the Parisian press have condescended to drop into the Theatre Cluny.

"*Mon Dieu!*" whispers Alphonse, who, having been a member of the *clacque* at the Gymnase, knows most of the notables in theatrical circles, "if this audience says it's a hit, Ambigue can put up his cap beside Scribe and Dumas. This crowd knows its business. *Diable!* there's Sarcey, of the *Gaulois*; that's Grimm, of *le Petit Journal*, and *voilà*, young Claretie—what he says will be important!"

So, after a little time, the overture begins. It is that of "La Grande Duchesse" of Jacques Offenbach, whose buoyant and sparkling rhythms are at this time the whistling tunes of Paris. The amorous strains of the "*Dites Lui*" makes Gertrude's heart beat tumultuously. To herself she whispers: "Yes; tell him I love him—tell him I love him!" and turns swimming eyes upon the author's box, that is still vacant.

Then the curtain goes up. She is not impressed with the opening scene. This seems too quiet in its almost classical repose.

"It is but an introduction, Mademoiselle," whispers Alphonse, deprecatingly. "Great authors don't hit the public while they are still coming into the theatre. Something better will come later."

"I hope it will!" growls Georgina. "The first scene was rather stupid. There was not a single kiss in it."

"Stupid?" dissents Gertrude, viciously. "Stupid—not at all! The dialogue was extremely brilliant. Didn't you see that oldish man in the front row laugh? He did laugh heartily."

"*Mon Dieu*, that's Arsène Houssaye!" gasps Alphonse, impressed.

This puts Miss Hammond into quite an elated excitement, which now becomes more intense, for by the end of the first act the audience has grown interested. Even the critics seem impressed.

When the curtain descends, Alphonse darts out into the lobby. He soon returns, rubbing his hands together, and says to the girls: "It made a very good effect. I heard Sarcey say to Emile Augier: 'It is a novel idea; a woman jealous of herself.' Women are often jealous of other women, but they are not

often green-eyed of themselves, you know," continues the waiter, grinningly. "Armande was very good. She looks very beautiful as the Athenian wife, doesn't she? That chic Greek costume permits her to show her exquisite white arms."

"Oh, very beautiful!" sighs Miss Hammond, who, though she wants the heroine of Ambigue's play to make a hit with the audience, fears her rival's charms may also make a hit with the author.

"But I heard Rousette say to one of the critics," jabbars the excited *garçon*, "'Just wait till the last act—that will take you off your feet!'"

To this Gertrude doesn't answer. She is gazing uneasily at the author's vacant box.

"Perhaps he is shunning the critics," whispers Alphonse, "and keeps behind the scenes, to be away from them. You know, authors go behind the curtain; they have that privilege."

Then the second act begins. Gazing upon the opening tableau, Alphonse exclaims: "Rousette must have thought pretty well of this drama; he's had new scenery painted for it. I'd expected the old wood canvas, that's done duty since the beginning of the Empire. But this Greek exterior, with Athens in the distance, is so new, *diable*, I can smell the paint."

"And very classic, too," remarks Miss Hammond.

Here Georgina breaks in rapturously: "Oh, look at the dancing nymphs!"

"Pretty girls Rousette has picked out; new costumes, also," asserts Alphonse. "*Tonnerre*, he's spent money on the piece."

Now applause commences to ripple through the audience, for they begin to understand the great proposition of the play, and it appeals to them.

The *locale* of the drama is ancient Greece, but its plot is so fast and Frenchy that at times both Gertrude and Georgina hide their blushing faces in the curtains of the box. Its novelty is extraordinary. It permits a tremendous display of varying passions from the heroine, who is possessed of a dual existence; in her hypnotic state, as the harlot Calypso, hating the sweet Athenian wife she really is. For both wife and harlot love the same man, the husband of the first, a young Athenian officer, serving with Pericles.

But Miss Gertie doesn't analyze a play that not only charms, but frightens her from its intense passions and fervid characterizations, for the leading rôle is impersonated by an artiste, who knows she has a great part, and has the power to make the audience feel it.

All the time, in spite of increasing applause that

now becomes an ovation, Miss Hammond's eyes are turned upon the author's box and gradually growing haggard; she scarce notes the performance. She doesn't know how great the play really is. The main impression on her agitated mind is that Ambigue is not here to receive the triumph that awaits him. She whispers to Alphonse: "Go to the stage entrance. In some way, find if Ambigue is behind the scenes. Tell him I am anxious."

From this errand the waiter returns with a scared face, and mutters: "He isn't there."

Now the fourth and last act begins, and soon becomes a triumph, not only with the audience, but with the critics. Calypso, the harlot, inflamed with jealous rage, places a cup of poison so that Calypso, the Athenian wife, her other self, will drink it. In the second tableau, Calypso, the pure Athenian bride, awakened from her hypnotic state, drinks this hemlock potion she has unwittingly prepared for herself.

Then comes the great death scene, when, under the subtle influence of the drug, the dying woman's mentality grows clear, and, in the arms of her husband, she knows that she, hypnotically, has been one of the *Hetaira*, and sighs: "Thanks to the gods, I have slain my viler self!"

Beautiful as a nymph, her exquisite form draped

in white gauzes, from which her alabaster arms emerge as grandly moulded as if chiseled by a Phydias, Armande dies with such graceful pathos and divine passion that she would strike Miss Hammond's heart with despair for Ambigue's fealty, were there not a greater anxiety within it. The girl has scarce grasped the play's full effect upon an infatuated audience; her gaze has never left the author's box. They are calling him. His name, announced from the stage, has been greeted with a tumult of *bravos* and applause. Even the great critics join in this. But there is no Ambigue, and a fearful terror racks his sweetheart's heart.

Though he is called again and again, there is no response. Rousette, coming before the curtain, has a perturbed look in his own eyes, though he contrives to say: "It is the modesty of genius that keeps this great author from us. To-morrow night I will have him here—for you."

"See that you do!" cries a student from the gallery. "We want to tell our new genius what we think of him."

"*Grand Dieu*, Sarcey is applauding that Quartier Latin demand," whispers Alphonse. "What an article he will publish to-morrow about our author."

Miss Hammond makes no reply to this. Even

Georgina is impressed with her companion's mien. It is tragic as that of Armande de Millefleurs when she had died upon the stage. "My God, if anything has happened to him!" shudders the girl, mentally, and demands: "Alphonse, where can he be?"

The waiter looks perturbed.

"How can I find him?" demands Gertrude, almost frantically. "He must be told of his triumph before despair destroys him," and she racks her brain how to discover at this time of night in the great city of Paris the man she loves.

Her agitated meditation is disturbed by Alphonse saying abruptly: "*Diable*, I think a thousand francs would do it!"

"A thousand francs! How?"

"But then, of course, that's more than Mademoiselle could afford."

"Pish, what's a thousand francs to *me*!" says the girl, excitedly.

At this arrogance of wealth from one who had been starving, the *garçon* nearly faints, and Georgina queries, excitedly: "Oh, my, what did the American Consul tell you? Are you an heiress?"

For Miss Hammond is pressing ten one-hundred-franc bills into Alphonse's hand and commanding: "Do it; whatever it is, do it!"

"Then I haven't time for explanation," whispers the waiter, for a few of the audience are already moving towards the exits. "I'll catch young Peron, of *La Petite Presse*, before he leaves his seat," and darts from them.

The two girls watch the crowd who, as usual after a phenomenal dramatic triumph, seem loath to disperse.

Many of the audience still continue to applaud, and in response to their bravos and demonstrations Armande de Millefleurs makes again her appearance and bows before the curtain. The beauty of the heroine of the drama adds to the poignancy of Miss Hammond's excited reflections. Those beautiful white arms may have been around the man she loves.

But Armande withdrawing, Alphonse shortly returns and says: "I couldn't stop to explain it then, but now it is done. I found young Peron of *La Petite Presse*. It is a little paper which sometimes publishes extra editions. For a thousand francs I knew they would be willing to put out immediately a sheet stating the great triumph of this play. I have made the arrangements. In a little over an hour—their office isn't very far from here—the newsboys and gamins will be shouting through the boulevards

and even in bohemian nooks, where poor Ambigue may be lurking, the announcement of the great triumph of his drama. Nothing will bring him quicker than that. A thousand francs guarantees the little paper against loss. Peron says it will be a great newspaper beat, this review of the play ahead of the grand journals in the morning. He is delighted with the idea. It will be done instantly. Oh, but you must be rich to pay for such great things, Mademoiselle. Though, *Mon Dieu*, how your new mother will reprove your extravagance."

This suggestion makes Georgina falteringly ejaculate: "Oh, mercy, won't we catch it!"

"Yes, we must be returning to Madame Perriqué's," sighs Miss Hammond. During the performance she has been so excited she has scarcely thought of her adopted mother.

"Besides," remarks Alphonse, "there is a chance we may find Ambigue in his lair. I forgot to look in his garret, which he inhabits along with the rats and the rubbish."

"Ambigue's garret! Take me there as quick as horses can fly!" whispers the girl, determinedly.

The party hurry down the stairs and through the crowded foyer, for the audience are now passing out. From their excited remarks, Miss Hammond knows the man she loves is regarded as a genius.

Reaching their *voiture*, they drive through the midnight streets of Paris, whose immensity tortures Miss Hammond. Has the man she loves become insane through despair? Is he lost among the great crowds of this cruel city?

Their hack rolls over a bridge across the Seine. Suddenly an awful shudder palsies her delicate frame. Looking upon the river's dark flowing tide, into her mind has flashed: "My God, has Ambigue sought to change despair into oblivion in those silent waters? Have the audience at the Cluny placed a laurel crown upon a drifting corpse?"

CHAPTER IX.

LOVE—AMONG THE RATS.

As the carriage rolls on past the Seine, young Mrs. Horton fortunately interrupts Gertrude's anxieties as to Ambigue with her vivacious chatter about his play. "Wasn't it grand, and wasn't it wicked!" she babbles. "I was red as Armande's scarlet hetaira costume half a dozen times."

"It was a very chaste play," dissents Alphonse, adding with French philosophy: "Calypso was pure when she died. As a wife, her only crime was to drive her devoted husband to despair with her jealous tantrums. Some of that was very funny, wasn't it? Even the critics laughed when the chaste Athenian lady, aroused from her hypnotic state, discovered the red harlot's cap in her own bed and demanded in beautiful poetic language: 'Who's been here since I've been gone?' *Ciel*, Eugene Labiche chuckled at that as if it was in one of his own Palais Royal farces."

This discussion brings them near to Madame Perriqué's, for Alphonse is too wary to drive up to the front of the house in a coach. He says: "She'd hear the wheels and nail you when you came in."

Consequently, the three leave the hack in the Rue de la Fayette and walk to the Rue de Provence. As they hurry along, the waiter suggests: "If Perriqué's discovered your absence, she's waiting for you at her front door. I'll take you up to Ambigue's garret by the servants' entrance and the back stairs."

He offers to remove his shoes, and to go up and seek for Ambigue himself, but Miss Hammond says, eagerly: "No, no; if he is there I want to tell him of his triumph!"

"And I want to clap him on the back and say 'bully boy!' You won't be jealous of that, Gertie, will you?" laughs Georgina.

Her companion doesn't answer this. Alphonse is already opening the servants' door with his pass key and the two girls are cautiously entering the house. Guided by the waiter, they reach the first floor by the back stairs.

Here Alphonse whispers, so faintly Miss Hammond can scarcely distinguish his words: "Perriqué has discovered you are out. She is in the reception-room watching the front entrance. I hear her talking with Rosenbaum."

The *garçon's* quick ears are correct. Madame Perriqué has discovered the absence of her charges and is grimly waiting to pounce upon them on their return. To Rosenbaum she has muttered: "Is Gertrude running after Ambigue? When I get hold of the minx she shall discover that I am her mother in fact as well as theory!" For Madame Perriqué is in a very nasty humor; Rosenbaum having asked suspiciously: "Holy Poker, you haven't told her anything about the money at the American Consul's yet?"

"Of course not! Do you think I'm a fool?" has tartly answered the landlady, afraid from the lawyer's perturbed manner to tell him the truth.

"Then I reckon it's all right," Rosenbaum had observed. "But you'd better go light on her, even if she has been trying to see the fellow. Wait till the love excitement is out of her and she has become downhearted, despairing and pliable; then we'll get her to sign the document and I'll collect the money for you!"

"Shucks, I know girls better than you do," was the ex-schoolmistress's reply. "If Gertie has gone out once, she will go again to meet this out-at-elbows pauper. When she's signed the document, I shall keep my daughter upstairs in her bedroom—if necessary, under lock and key."

With this in her mind, the grim woman's attention is directed to the front of her house, not to its rear. She doesn't catch the light steps of the two girls or the heavier footfalls of Alphonse's stockinged feet as they glide up the back stairs of the house and reach the floor immediately below Ambigue's garret, which is approached by a narrow rickety ladder-like flight of steps.

Alphonse has not ventured to strike a match. Now, with him in the lead, Georgina hanging on to his coat-tail and Gertrude holding her hand, the three cautiously ascend the dusty, unswept steps. The waiter opens the door. A ray of moonlight is coming through the little latticed dormer windows into the low room, tingeing its bare, cobwebbed oaken rafters that support the slanting roof.

As the girls enter, Alphonse closes the door behind them, and just in time, for there is a hurried scurrying and Georgina tries to run back, exclaiming: "Jingo, something rushed between my legs!" as Gertrude falters: "Oh, mercy, what's that?"

"Rats!" mutters Alphonse. "Lots of them up here!"

"Mercy!" screams the young matron, while Miss Hammond, gathering up her muslin skirts, gasps: "Oh, goodness, one ran across my foot now!" and is

about to spring onto a packing case that looms up before her in the moonlight.

But Alphonse exclaims: "Don't dare to trust yourself to the furniture!" and apparently knowing the locale very well, strikes a match and lights a candle, which he places on a rickety deal table.

In the increased illumination, the girls see rats everywhere, darting from old trunks left by former boarders in liquidation of unpaid accounts, and from packing cases whose placards indicate they once contained provisions; most of the little animals taking refuge in several large closets in the corners of the big room.

Alphonse, as he lights a second candle, explains cheerily: "Ambigue sometimes has great battles with the little fellows. *Sapristi*, I have seen him shy half a dozen heavy tragedies at them in a night. You see, since the Emperor has torn down so many old buildings to make new streets, the poor animals, driven from their ancient homes, are very numerous in Perriqué's garret."

"And he lives up here alone?" sighs Miss Hammond, looking about the curiously melancholy apartment, which is impressive in its bare loneliness, its terrific poverty and its peculiar combination of store-room and dwelling place.

A little cot bed with worn bedding, but scrupulously clean, is in an obscure corner of the low unplastered room, quite retired from the rays of the two candles, one of which is burning in a battered tin candlestick and the other stuck in an old absinthe bottle. From a clothes line in another corner dangle a couple of dilapidated white linen shirts, three or four collars of assorted sizes and some underwear, apparently drying. A bucket beneath them apparently serves as washtub, while a laundry iron indicates that Ambigue does up his own linen.

In a box near this are a couple of plates, a cup and saucer and one or two knives and spoons whose decorations and appearance denote they have been confiscated from Perriqué's dining-table.

In each corner of the long, low, slanting-roofed room are large rough deal closets, apparently used for storage purposes, for upon the door of one is chalked "Trunks" and on another "Linen," the one nearest to the girls being marked "Groceries and Provisions." These have deal doors, the grocery one being secured by a strong padlock, Perriqué apparently fearing raids from the hungry bohemian.

But near the windows, on the other side, the dusty low-ceiled, unplastered apartment has more of a literary appearance. Three or four packing cases are

half-open, showing some school-room desks, old textbooks, and the hastily packed appurtenances of Madame Perriqué's former school when she removed to this house to become a *hotesse*. A school chair, a deal box marked "Sawyer's Soups," three broken cases, placarded severally "Ships' Biscuits," "Worcestershire Sauce," and "Cross & Blackwell's Pickles," make the seats and lounges of the room; while another box, branded "Westphalia Hams," is apparently used for an arm-chair, it having a dilapidated school cushion upon it.

After one quick, nervous glance about the cold and dreary place, Miss Hammond, shuddering at the cruel poverty of the man she loves, sighs: "He is not here."

"Of course, he isn't. There's his hired dress-suit for to-night at the Cluny hanging up on that clothes-line," assents Alphonse.

"Jingo, what a curious hole," remarks Georgina, and, in the freedom of her short skirts, goes wandering about the big, low, rambling room inspecting its cobwebbed nooks and corners, though once she utters a little affrighted cry as a rat bolder than the rest looks wonderingly out upon her from round the edge of the Cross & Blackwell pickle box.

"Yes, and very bohemian," remarks the waiter

rather proudly. "Ambigue does his light washing in that corner." He directs Miss Hammond's attention to the clothes line. "Moliere used to prepare his twelve o'clock suppers over that gas jet until Madame Perriqué turned it off," he grins. "Now he indulges in *cold* midnight collations."

"But where is he?" breaks in the girl anxiously; a moment after exclaiming: "How foolish we have been. I know Perriqué has barred the front door on the poor fellow. She will not let him in."

"Oh, that doesn't matter much to Ambigue," laughs the waiter. "She's barred him out before a dozen times and he crawls over that roof and in that window." Alphonse indicates a little dormer window that looks out upon an abutting roof. "He knows the servants in the next house and they let him in. If a locked front door had kept him out, Moliere Shakespeare Ambigue would have more than once been compelled to walk the streets of Paris all night."

"Walk the streets of Paris! That's what he's doing now, perhaps," shudders Miss Hammond. The young lady knows what it is to be without a roof in Paris. To this she adds frantically: "And to think he was not at the theatre to see the triumph of his glorious play. Ah, fate has been cruel to

him!" Gertrude sighs and sinks upon the box marked "Westphalia Hams," which gives a warning creak even under her light impact.

"Cruel! It was damnable!" assents the waiter. "How Moliere will kick himself for not having been at the Cluny." He picks up from the table a scrap of paper and exclaims: "Aha, here is part of his impromptu speech!"

Whereupon with much vivacious gesticulation Alphonse reads: "This wholly unexpected ovation agitates me so much that my tongue in surprise cleaves to the roof of my mouth. This totally unlooked for triumph from the generous public, this unhopèd extraordinary favor shown by your liberal hands, so overcome me that the few words that flow spontaneously from the poor lips of Moliere Shakespeare Ambigue are those of a heart bursting with gratitude, not those of a head filled with vainglory or made unduly arrogant with adoration.'"

"*Diable*," grins the waiter, "he has rewritten that modest impromptu five times."

"Oh, don't—don't laugh!" cried Gertrude, angrily. "His personal triumph was stolen from him by unhappy chance."

A moment after she modestly falters: "I would not have come to his room, but I felt he must know.

I—I must leave a note here to tell him. Can't you find pens and paper, a pencil, anything with which I can scribble a few lines, so that if he comes in he may know that he is no longer poor and unknown, but successful and triumphant."

As she speaks, Gerty is looking hastily about the portion of the room devoted to literature. In her search for stationery, she picks up a worn parchment bound book, and glancing at it, murmurs: "Madame Perkins's old role and punishment book."

About this time Georgina exclaims: "Why, if there isn't one of Perkins's ancient school bookcases," and commences to pull out the drawers and inspect its books, laughing: "Exercise books, impositions, and oh, mercy—Tickler!" Young Mrs. Horton gives a shudder as she exhibits a lithe rattan, and her face expresses unpleasant recollections of her early childhood, when "Tickler" and she had been too well acquainted.

"An old friend of yours, Georgina," half-smiles Gertrude.

"Gracious, I believe Perriqué would like to give it to me now!" giggles the vivacious Georgina; then pauses, listens and whispers: "Goodness, Alphonse, what's that noise on the stairs!" and she and the waiter glide cautiously to the door and look down.

But Miss Hammond has become too absorbed in the recollections arising in her mind from the records of her old school for the moment to pay attention to anything else. She is reading in Perriqué's angular script: "Gertrude Eloise Hammond, bread and water for watching an unknown man in the street; Gertrude Hammond, locked up for flirting with a man; Gertrude Hammond expelled, a love letter being found in her possession signed Gaspard." Yes, Gaspard loved me when I was a school-girl, and I—I—I didn't always laugh at his devotion," she sighs. Then her face lights up with tender triumph; she murmurs: "This shows where he found my name. This proves he did not intentionally make me the bait of these fortune hunters. Innocent of one, he may be innocent of everything. It was art, not love, that made Ambigue so careful of this actress. This book—this book,"—she fondles it with her hands, and tears dim her lovely eyes—"takes me back to when he was Gaspard and I was Mignonette."

From this she is aroused by an awful shock. Georgina, whose emotions are always at the end of her tongue, exclaims abruptly: "Oh, murder, if Ambigue has committed suicide!"

Though it has been in Miss Hammond's mind several times to-night, this horrible suggestion com-

ing from another has such a terrific effect upon her that she nearly swoons.

But Alphonse, supporting her slight form, whispers: "Look out for the furniture about here or I don't know what will happen to you. Calm yourself, Mademoiselle. Moliere Shakespeare Ambigue has had too many tough battles with the world to give up because Fate has put on a number ten heavy *philosophé* and kicked him a little harder. Ah, it was a glorious night," he says encouragingly, "*Sacré bleu*, how the gallery screamed. All I am afraid of," adds the waiter, "is that when he hears, Moliere will go crazy from double distilled emotional joy."

While Alphonse and Georgina discuss points in the performance, Miss Hammond, having found a somewhat torn and not entirely immaculate piece of paper, has been writing in pencil a few words, undressed and unsigned, stating the production and the tremendous success of Ambigue's play this evening.

Upon this note she places a beer bottle holding the candle, for there are many drafts of night air from the numerous nooks and corners of this immense untenanted room. Some of the small panes in the little dormer windows have been broken and only repaired by sheets of paper pasted over them.

"I cannot wait for him any longer. Stay here,

Alphonse. Call, Moliere's attention to this. You—you can tell him I wrote it, though I have not signed it," murmurs the blushing girl.

But the waiter's eyes are now fixed suspiciously upon the door opening from the stairway. He glides to it, and returning, whispers: "*Diable*, Perriqué is on the stairs!"

"In Ambigue's garret at midnight. What will she think of me?" stammers Miss Hammond.

"Jingo, if Perriqué tells Jack I was in a man's bedroom at this time of night, what a row he'll raise!" whimpers Georgina alarmed.

"You can't pass her on the stairs; she's got a lighted candle!" mutters the waiter.

To this the young American lady whispers as the blushes fly over her face: "She will accuse me of being worse than bold. Suzanne must not find me here. Alphonse, what shall I do?"

"Slip into one of the closets!" suggests the *garçon*.

At his words, Georgina tries to open a door, but mutters: "It is locked!"

"Of course, it is," replies the waiter. "It's the provision closet. Besides, it generally has the most rats in it."

"This one looks safe," Gertrude glides to the door marked "Trunks." Finding it unlocked, she opens it.

"If you feel 'em moving about you, get on a trunk," advises Alphonse, assisting her.

"Feel *rats* moving about me in the dark—oh!" This is a sighing shudder, which is shut off by the closing of the door upon Miss Hammond.

"But *me!* Perriqué will tell Jack I was in a fellow's bedroom after midnight!" shudders young Mrs. Horton, dancing nervously about on tip-toes.

"In with the linen, then!" says the waiter, opening the door of the other closet.

"Are there any rats in there?"

"Lots!"

"Oh, murder! I see 'em!" shivers Georgina, as Alphonse shoves her in and closes the door upon her, he not having much time to lose.

The landlady's step is already on the landing. Had her limbs not been rheumatic, she would have reached the place long before her charges had flitted out of sight. She has a lighted candle in her hand, but seeing that the room is illuminated, she begins savagely: "Ambigue, did I not give you notice to get out?"

"You may have given Ambigue notice—but not me!" remarks Alphonse debonairly, though a nervous grin contorts his suave smooth-shaven countenance.

"What are you doing here?" interjects the landlady, cutting him short suspiciously. "You have been away for four hours from your duties. I give you notice to quit, also."

"Thank you, Madame," murmurs the bowing waiter. "On my discharge, of course you will pay me the three months' back wages I have earned."

"Don't be impertinent," exclaims Suzanne, irately. "I will settle your wages when to-morrow I receive certain moneys for Miss Hammond's board and lodging." Here a new idea disturbs Perriqué's mind. "You left the house about the time my daughter did, I think," she observes anxiously. "Do you know where she is, Alphonse? Do you know—"

The landlady pauses in her speech to give a vicious kick as a big rat runs around the box marked "Holland Butter." "Thank Heaven, I've killed that one," she exclaims triumphantly; then queries, suspiciously: "What's that?" for a faint sound is heard from the closet in which Georgina is ensconced.

"Merely a rat squealing," giggles the waiter. "It is common about here."

But Madame Perriqué is too busy to heed his remark. She says: "I feared Ambigue had sneaked in and was trying to carry off his worthless wardrobe and his miserable plays. Come with me downstairs, Alphonse, and lock up the house."

"But perhaps you would like me to gather up Monsieur Ambigue's effects" suggests the *garçon*, loitering behind her.

To this she answers: "To-morrow morning! Precede me down the stairs. You can carry the candle."

"Yes, Madame," assents Alphonse, who can think of no immediate evasion of her order and reflects: "On my first chance, I will come up and assist Miss Hammond out."

At this moment, Madame Perriqué economically blows out the two candles burning in the room, and he is compelled to descend the little stairway before her, cogitating ruefully: "Alone in the dark with the rats, those poor girls will be frightened to death."

But the stern voice of his mistress is urging his lingering descent. "Are you a cripple, dolt? Step quick!"

On arriving at the lower floor, however, she suddenly countermands her order to lock up, faltering: "*Mon Dieu*, neither that wretch Georgina nor Gertie has returned," and her face indicates both concern and rage.

She is joined by Mr. Daniel Webster Rosenbaum, whose suave countenance denotes he is equally concerned. Alphonse hears her whisper to him: "Just wait till I get my hand on the baggage!"

"You must restrain yourself, Madame Perriqué," commands the lawyer. "Of course, after we've got things fixed, it may be well to display your power as Gertrude's mother, but not before!" A moment after he comments uneasily: "There's something curious going on. A messenger came from the Cluny Theatre while you were upstairs. He left this laurel wreath for the absquatulated Ambigue."

"Rousette's mockery of the out-at-elbows wretch," growls Perriqué. "If my Gertrude's gallivanting after that bohemian, I'll put her on bread and water, old as she is."

But Gertrude is already being punished! Up in the attic, she has slightly opened the door from the closet; finding herself alone in the darkness, with many pattering feet about her, she is whispering: "Alphonse, I am frightened—frightened of these rats. Where are you?"

A muffled scream from Georgina: "They are up my skirts now; I can feel 'em!" makes both girls run into the room.

A moment later young Mrs. Horton, tremblingly gasps: "A burglar! A burglar!" and darts back into her hiding place.

At the little dormer window that opens upon the roof of the abutting house, Miss Hammond sees Am-

bigue, the bohemian. Though a spasm of joy flies through her, she retreats from him more nervously than she would from a burglar. "What will he imagine if he finds me here alone in his apartment at this time of night—*waiting for him?*" She tries to reach the door opening on the stairs, but stumbles in the darkness over the litter and packing boxes on the floor.

He is opening the window; he will discover her.

Thinking Georgina has fled, the modesty of maidenhood causes the young American lady to glide into her closet again, as the gaunt Ambigue slips an agile leg over the window casing, and climbs into his own apartment. Peering from her closet, Gertrude sees him strike a match and light a candle. Then she hears him cry, suspiciously: "*Diable*, somebody has burned a portion of my dip in my absence; somebody has been here. *Malheur*, have they stolen one of my plays?" This is followed by such a hideous, despairing guffaw that the listening girl shudders.

"*Parbleu!*" jeers the unfortunate bohemian, chattering half dementedly to himself; "who'd steal one of them now? What's literature to me who to-night walked along the river quays and debated whether the water was too cold." His next words are so astounding, his sweetheart thinks him crazy; he ex-

claims: "But I come back here to battle with demons! For that I must be strong!" then sighs: "I am almost faint from hunger. To live I must eat. Ah, how these cases of canned beef mock me. Empty!" he gives one a vicious kick—"empty as my stomach, vacuous as my heart!"

Then Miss Hammond hears a chuckle. "I had forgotten Madame Perriqué's provision storeroom. She doesn't know I have a key." A moment later the big padlock clicks and Gaspard places on the table a string of bologna sausages, a piece of cheese, a case of biscuits, a can of sardines and a pot of butter.

Gertrude's spirits are better, she knows Ambigue is alive, and were it not for the rats that make her shudder, she would smile as he places his white teeth in a big bologna sausage and exclaims: "*Diable*, some champagne in there! I'll drink as well as eat."

He is springing up for this purpose, when Madame Perriqué, followed by Mr. Rosenbaum, comes angrily in. The landlady says: "I heard a noise up here. I've caught you! You've sneaked over the roof again. That's burglary!"

"Welcome to my humble domicile," observes the bohemian debonairly: "And you, Monsieur Rosenbaum, accept a light supper I am preparing."

This light supper doesn't improve Suzanne's

humor. She sinks onto an empty box and snivels: "And every night I thought it was the rats."

"*Sapristi*, an agreeable disappointment," remarks the dramatist, airily. "You now know your provisions were not thrown away."

Here Rosenbaum interjects, a professional tone in his voice: "As the counsel of the lady who now legally occupies the position of mother to Miss Gertrude Hammond, I must demand where you have abducted her daughter, sir." Daniel Webster has been racking his brain as to the whereabouts of his prey, and has concluded the scribbler must know something about it.

"Yes, you reprobate," exclaims Madame Perriqué, "tell me where you have my abducted daughter in hiding."

"I abduct *her*?" stammers Ambigue; then rapturously breaks out: "It would be the joy of my life to abduct Mignonette," adding these astounding words: "But I have even a nobler duty to perform—that is, to save her."

"To save her!" screams Suzanne.

"Yes; save her from you, monster! and from you, *diabliesse*!" He indicates the astonished Rosenbaum and the irate Perriqué. "It was my Gertrude's peril that kept me from suicide to-night. In disappointed

agony, I paced the streets of Paris and looked from a distance upon the Cluny Theatre. It was lighted up. They were playing the old piece. A man passing by said 'dramatic triumph.' To myself I cried: 'That should have been mine! Those plaudits—that applause should be for me, Ambigue, the outcast!' Distractedly I flew to the river, and the flickering waters of the Seine seemed to sigh to me: 'Here is the only happiness of life—oblivion!' Then suddenly the marvelous interest of both of you in Mignonette flashed through my mind. I said: 'These demons want her—for what? Coward Ambigue, to desert a poor girl who is in the clutch of Harpies. I'll go back to save her from those who would poison her young heart and devour her innocent soul. Not because I have hope, for that has gone from me, but because she once said she loved me—because she is helpless!' "

The pathos of his miserable story would probably bring tears to Gertrude's eyes, but she only hears it in a confused, distracted manner, for she is now battling with the rats. Familiar with her presence, in the darkness the little animals have grown bolder. The poor girl is shudderingly brushing them away, and though faint with disgust, is clenching her teeth to prevent an outcry that would expose her to the

shame of being found alone at midnight in hiding in Ambigue's apartment.

Moliere's oration has been listened to with mingled astonishment and rage by the New Orleans lawyer and the French *hotesse*, though rage predominates in Perriqué as the bohemian continues philosophically: "But to protect my love, I must be strong, therefore a little more supper!" With this he makes his two rows of strong white teeth meet in another sausage with such vigor that it disappears almost as he speaks the words.

"You double dyed villain, abusing me and stealing my provisions!" cries Suzanne savagely. "But you shall tell me where you have my daughter in hiding?"

"Oh, yes, of course, she is here! Look for an angel of virtue in the closets of a bachelor's bedroom. That's right—take my suggestion! Perhaps your adopted daughter is in the trunk receptacle, or the old clothes department," the bohemian scoffs at Madame Perriqué, who, catching a faint sighing sound, now follows his advice. "A little afraid of the rats, Mr. Rosenbaum?" laughs Moliere, for the lawyer has retreated from three or four rodents that run about his feet.

But Ambigue stops his jeering monologue as the landlady screams in puritanical anger: "I have found

her, the shameless minx; in his very room—at midnight!” and bears the fainting form of the beautiful girl out of the trunk closet.

The rats had overcome Miss Hammond’s nerves. She had fought with herself and bitten her lips and clenched her teeth to keep from crying out and delivering herself to the shame of discovery. But as the little animals, grown bold by darkness and familiarity with her, had glided about her pretty feet and romped over her delicate ankles, and one had clambered up her petticoat, she had given shiver after shiver, and, still, refusing to scream, had fainted upon the trunk on which she had taken refuge.

But now she is in the hands of the Philistines; the woman who has a mother’s rights over her is about to bear her to her room below, muttering: “Shameless jade,” and “Bread and water”; the lawyer who would make her beauty and her fortune his prey, though he scowls in malignant jealousy at the bohemian, smiles triumphantly as he shrewdly cogitates that this episode will justify Madame Perriqué in locking Miss Hammond up and never permitting Ambigue to see her again.

Rosenbaum’s possessive suavity makes Ambigue a demon. With a shriek of rage he drags the swooning girl from Perriqué’s arms, crying: “Avaunt, *diab-*

lesse!" Getting her in his embrace, he sighs over his lovely burden and fondles her, muttering wildly: "Did they treat you so badly, Mignonette, you had to fly up here to escape from these demons? Was Ambigue's poor garret your only place of refuge in all the world? Poor as I am, you shall not leave it. Darling, we will starve together!" With this he caresses the sweet lips at his mercy till the lawyer gnashes his teeth in rage and the ex-schoolmarm blushes frantically.

"Wretch, let me have my daughter!" cries Suzanne sternly, trying to drag the inanimate Gertrude from him.

"Never, monster! See those unshed tears upon her eyelids. Never! She has fled to the man she loves; she stays here. It is Mignonette and Gaspard now!"

"Give her up, you illegal scoundrel!" commands Daniel Webster, advancing on him.

"Dare but to lay a hand upon her, such is my despair, I seize you in my arms and spring with you out of that window!" cries the author. Then, as the lawyer shudders from him, Ambigue jeers demoniacally: "*Diable*, what a joke that will be upon the police. They will not know whether I murdered you or you assassinated me!"

This philosophical suggestion makes both Perriqué and Rosenbaum fly in panic to the door of the room.

"There is nothing left for us to do but have this man arrested," the landlady whispers with pallid lips. "Rosenbaum, come with me. We will get gendarmes."

"*Parbleu*, how I frightened the Harpies!" chuckles the bohemian as he bears his still swooning sweetheart to a long provision case at the side of the apartment, upon which she can recline, and places her lovely head carefully and tenderly upon the one cushion in the room.

Perriqué, standing tremblingly at the door, emits a shriek of rage, for Moliere has flown into her store-room, brought out a bottle of her best champagne, knocked its head off, and by the aid of a dilapidated tumbler is pouring the liquor down his beloved's throat as he despairingly implores: "Wake up! It is thy Gaspard, Mignonette. Wake up to meet with me the fate of the starving love of a starving wretch!"

Her purloined champagne makes the landlady vindictively bold. She ventures a step or two into the apartment and throws the laurel wreath, that had rested forgotten in her hand, at the feet of Ambigue, crying jeeringly: "A present from Rousette

in mockery of the fate of your miserable play, you dramatic fraud!"

Then she timidly darts away after the retreating Rosenbaum, for the bohemian's bearing has become terrific. The half-revived Gertrude, in a dazed, somnambulistic way, sees him stalk the room like a tragedy ghost and hears him moan: "Oh, miserable plays upon which I have lavished my life, there you lie in manuscript; hopes dead and buried, pictures that will be forever turned towards the wall, laughs that never will be heard, tragedies that never will make the audience weep. I will burn them, I will destroy them! I have wasted my manhood on them and they do not give me even bread for the woman I love!"

He has his dramas in his hand. In a moment they will be a bonfire over the flame of the flickering candle, when from the street, rising clear in the winter air as if in mockery, is heard a newsboy's voice, coming from the nearby Rue de la Fayette: "Extra! *Petite Presse* extra. Great success! Theatre Cluny! Romantic, extraordinary episode; the author missing!"

Ambigue drops the manuscripts. "What is that the boy says?" he jeers. "The author *missing*? Egad, no *author* will be missed."

But now, through the window he had entered by and only partially closed, arises the voice of another street gamin holloing: "Great success of Moliere Shakespeare Ambigue's play at the Theatre Cluny! 'The Passions of Calypso'!"

The perspiration of excitement bursts out upon the author's brow; he mutters in a dazed way: "Theatre Cluny! 'The Passions of Calypso'!" then screams: "My theatre! My piece! *Mon Dieu*, these newsboys have been sent here to mock me! Or am I going crazy?" Suddenly he claps his hands to his eyes and shrieks: "The blow has fallen! I am mad! Calypso, my love, has come out of my brain to live on earth!"

Entering the little doorway of his garret, and throwing off a long cloak, is Armande de Millefleurs, costumed as the heroine of his play. Wishing to make quick announcement to the author, she had thrown a wrap over her stage dress and driven to the Rue de Provence. Admitted by Alphonse, who has just received knowledge of Ambigue's presence in the house, she has insisted upon going up with her good news to the successful dramatist.

With her white arms issuing from the gauzes of her Grecian costume that drapes her stately yet graceful figure, she stands before him and exclaims:

"Ambigue! Genius!" embracing him with the fervor of an actress for an author who has given her a great and triumphant role. "I have come straight from the theatre to tell you. Why were you not there?"

"Where?" stammers Moliere, pale and trembling.

"At the Cluny Theatre to receive the ovation on the success of your play."

"Bah," screams the bohemian, "it is postponed for a year."

"No; it was played to-night to the greatest applause. They called for you again and again. The manager looked for you to embrace you," answers Armande enthusiastically.

"A manager embrace *me*! Now I am insane!" utters the dazed author. "And you in the costume of my Calypso! Oh, it is part of my illusion. I *am* crazy!" His limbs scarce support him, but he abruptly ejaculates: "The touch of these white arms is real!" and gives the beautiful members little unbelieving pinches that make the actress squeal.

"Crazy! You will be crazy with delight," half-shrieks Armande, trying to protect her arms. "Here's an extra—*La Petite Presse*—just struck off." She extends to him a paper. "Read the lines there. Read them and believe!"

"Read and believe?" The bohemian seizes the

journal in his trembling hand. Holding it up to the flickering candle, he mutters: "Yes, in black ink. 'Great Triumph!' In big letters. 'The advent of a new genius!' *Mon Dieu*, has the child I love been born, and will it live? My play, my play!" Tears dim the eyes of the poor author who has suffered so much this night.

"Calm yourself, great dramatist," whispers Armande, and her white arms again close about him, bohemian fashion. "Grand genius that I made by my superb acting." She gives him an enthusiastic artistic kiss.

But now Ambigue starts from the actress. A pale faced girl has staggered up and is gliding with trembling limbs silently from the room. In the dim light she looks like the spirit of his Mignonette, whose pure brown eyes gaze reproachfully upon him. He cries rapturously: "Thank God, my Gertrude, you have recovered your senses to hear of my superb triumph. I am no more poor, I am rich enough to give you——"

Her uplifted hand and disdainful face stay his voice. "I—I came here to tell you of the success of your play and wish you joy and happiness upon it," stammers Miss Hammond. "But you have learned by dearer lips." She turns away.

“Dearer lips—no, no! There are no dearer lips on earth than yours.”

To this the young American lady only replies with an unbelieving shudder.

But great actresses can be jealous also. Armande remarks sneeringly: “I shall retire in favor of made-moiselle. No wonder with such beauty in your garret, even your first play had not charm enough to take you this evening to the Theatre Cluny.”

Gertrude bows her head in shame.

To Miss Hammond’s jealousy of the fascinating actress is now added a poignant abasement and humiliating reproach. She has endured the ignominy of being discovered in hiding at midnight in Ambigue’s apartment—and for what? To see a woman who had racked her heart before, rack it again; to behold this actress caress the author with the enthusiasm of an artiste who has just played his great role; to hear Armande de Millefleurs tell the tale of success to the ears of the man whose triumph her generosity had made possible.

By a mighty effort she says icily: “I beg you to excuse me, sir. No wonder this woman acted superbly to make the triumph of the man she loves.”

“Oh, I always act superbly!” asserts Armande with the modesty of the true artist.

But Gertrude pays no more attention to her. She staggers towards the door, saying brokenly: "Permit me to retire, Monsieur. Madame Perriqué was right."

This is answered by a snort of joy. Miss Hammond's new mother and Rosenbaum have come cautiously in backed by two sturdy gendarmes. These stand at the door, barring exit.

"Ah, at last you believe in the faithlessness of this wretch. My poor child!" In maternal solicitude Suzanne opens her arms.

These look to Ambigue like the claws of a bird of prey.

He cries out: "No, no! I forbid you to leave the room with your victim!"

"*Your* victim!" answers Rosenbaum. "Step aside, sir, or the police will act." To this he adds suspiciously: "Some one has run away from the room!"

In this he is right, for Armande, after gazing twice in astounded unbelieving affright upon the lawyer's face, has gasped to herself: "In pursuit of my salary!" and glided into the closet in which Miss Hammond had once battled with the rats.

Despite her misery, Moliere notices this and grins even as his sweetheart says proudly: "No, no; I'll not have a divided love. Monsieur, let me go from here."

Then, were not the bohemian in many respects a great man, in the moment of his success he would lose his love. But he understands the varying passions of woman and knows that if Miss Hammond turns her back on him now she turns her back on him forever. He cries sternly: "By my love, I command you to remain! On the night of my happiness and triumph you shall not misunderstand my heart."

"Your heart I understand too well!" The young lady sighs, but moves haughtily towards the door.

"But do you understand *his*?" Ambigue's finger is directed to the triumphant Rosenbaum. "Do you understand *hers*?" The bohemian's gaunt digit is shaken at the elated Perriqué. "Think how Gaspard loved you, Mignonette, and be romantic!" he implores.

Just for an instant at the mention of his old time name an answering flash dispels the frigidity of Miss Hammond's exquisite face.

Noting this, Daniel Webster says sternly to the gendarmes, who have seated themselves upon convenient packing cases and gazed inquiringly upon the strange scene: "Officers, arrest this man!"

"For what?" asks Moliere.

"For the forgery of those letters by which you lured men into Madame Perriqué's house. As her

mother, my client will prosecute you for using her adopted daughter's name."

"*Sacré bleu*, the name of my love is sacred. Don't dare to mix it up with police details. If you do, beware!" Ambigue's manner is imposing. "And if you, Madame Perriqué, in your assumed motherhood of this girl for purposes of your own, try to make her marry this scoundrel lawyer, you I will annihilate!"

"Oh, heavens, he's making threats!" snivels Suzanne.

"Threats I will keep. Rosenbaum, be careful of yourself. I have in the third act of my comedy, entitled 'The Shadow of a Crow,' the means of obliterating you." Gazing at his sweetheart, who stands icy as a statue before him, Moliere knows she is dead to his passion until he startles her from her lethargy of wounded pride. He prepares to act.

"Nonsense!" jeers the lawyer. "As you are a Frenchman, it is useless to call you a lunatic." This speech isn't a wise one; it makes the two gendarmes his enemies at once.

"As you are an American shyster," retorts Ambigue airily, "it is useless to call you anything else. Instead of arresting me, I shall have these remarkably fine gendarmes arrest you."

The two guardians of the law spring up alertly.

"Arrest *me*? Monstrous, absurd!" guffaws the New Orleans practitioner. "Arrest me—for what?"

"For being husband of one woman and attempting to marry another!"

"Your proofs?" cries Daniel Webster mockingly.

"Behold them in that closet!"

A piercing shriek interrupts him.

"Hear the proofs squeal among the rats!" grins Ambigue.

With a quick stride he is in the cabinet and drawing the screaming Armande out, a couple of rodents hanging to her Greek costume, he says: "Permit me to introduce your wife Euphrosne, of the New Orleans Theatre, now famous as Armande de Millefleurs."

"Armande de Millefleurs!" shudders Gertrude, a tinge of disgust in her sweet voice.

"The actress!" screams Madame Perriqué, and all utter exclamations of astonishment.

Armande may be timid about rats, but she is not frightened of her lost husband. She says: "You villain! Have you dared to follow me to France to steal my salary?"

"Holy Moses!" gasps Daniel Webster, staggering back, his eyes rolling in his head, as Ambigue ob-

serves dramatically: "Quick curtain! Heroine fainting in the arms of the man she loves," and is about to seize upon the exquisite Gertrude.

But the young American lady draws herself up proudly and smites his heart with this logical proposition: "Proving that man to be a villain doesn't prove you to be innocent!"

CHAPTER X.

THE PRINCE IN THE ATTIC.

Here Ambigue is compelled for the moment to devote himself to another affair. The great actress, drawn up like the Grecian Juno, is looking upon Rosenbaum and demanding: "You, my husband, dared to approach with words of love another! Miserable wretch—when you were wedded to me in New Orleans, where you stole my weekly salary."

"Monster," cries Ambigue, anxious to stand well with the great actress, "about to crown your infamy by committing bigamy."

"Your proofs?" remarks Daniel nonchalantly, in lawyer's habit.

"Proofs?" echoes Gertrude indignantly, "when I have three letters from you tendering marriage to me."

"My dear young lady," returns the lawyer suavely, "don't misunderstand me. My suit to you is and has been perfectly honorable and perfectly legal. From this claimant I have been divorced."

"Immoral American divorces don't count in moral France!" jeers Ambigue.

At this truthful legal exposition, the lawyer turns upon him angrily.

But Armande, who has that peculiar emotional artistic nature which requires the undying adoration of all men who have been her lovers, suddenly bursts into a torrent of tears and sobs: "Divorced? Oh, Dan; my sweet Daniel, when the very handkerchief you have in your pocket"—she pulls one from his coat-tail—"was embroidered by me!" adding angrily: "You will not deny this lingerie at the *Tribunale of Police Correctionale*."

"Very well," answers Rosenbaum savagely, "if tomorrow in the police court I am declared your husband, I seize your salary. I know enough of French law for that, Madame!"

"Fiend!" shudders the great artiste, "and I have just had a raise."

But Ambigue is between them, imploring: "No, no; that would involve the ruin of my play if you took her salary; she wouldn't act, dear Rosenbaum. Would you distract your great wife from her immortal role? My God, be reconciled. She gets a thousand francs a week—touch Rousette for two hundred and fifty more. Be reunited, and this night

in each other's arms bless Ambigue for making you love again."

"Oh, Dan," falters the great actress. "You used to love me in New Orleans." Dan is not a great beauty, but he has once been hers and no other woman shall have him.

"Twelve hundred and fifty francs—I might love again," whispers the lawyer ardently. He knows that he has lost Miss Hammond, and if he cannot catch the big fish will subsist upon the smaller one. So Rosenbaum, Armande and Madame Perriqué get into a three-cornered discussion, the landlady again demanding her unpaid board bill from the actress.

Miss Hammond is moving towards the door of the room. With a bound Ambigue is after her. His gaunt fingers clutch her rounded wrist. He whispers frantically: "How could I, knowing that woman had a husband, make love to *her*?"

"With my own eyes I saw her kiss you!" Oh, the reproach of those lovely orbs.

"Merely the salute of a great actress to an author. Kisses are common in bohemian Paris as flakes of snow upon a winter's night. Oh, my sweet innocent, your young life has been that of a schoolroom, not that of the artistic world. The kisses of genius are no more than shaking hands in primer circles. Every

prima donna who makes a furor at *Des Italiens* expects to be saluted by the great *maestros*, Rossini and Auber. 'Tis proof of her success. Armande," he calls out, "will you explain to this young lady how little your kisses mean."

"Hang it, sir," answers Rosenbaum jealously, "did you dare let my wife kiss you?"

"Oh, he's villain enough to do anything," asserts Madame Perriqué ferociously.

"To a woman of your advanced age, all men are villains—they cannot love you!" retorts Ambigue. To the pale beauty confronting him he whispers: "Still, whether I lose or win you, I'll protect you from this miserable woman, who has some selfish interest of her own in your sweet life. If you had listened in that closet, you would have learned 'twas thought of your peril that kept me from suicide while I wandered despairing by the Seine to-night."

"Yes, I—I heard that," utters Gertrude faintly.

"Then you must know that I adore you. Inspect the records of the buried past and become romantic!" cries the erratic Ambigue. With this, to the astonishment of them all, he flies to the books and documents of Perriqué's old school. Tossing them to the girl, whose mask of icy hauteur is being torn from her, he cries: "Read these and see that Gaspard loved

you. Every punishment placed upon you as a school-girl was because you were my idol. I worshipped at the altar, you were the sacrifice, Perriqué the stern high priestess. When you wrote five hundred times, 'I must not look from the window upon Gaspard,' it meant my adoration. When you had bread and water and solitary confinement, it was because I threw violets into your window. Aha, here is one little withered offering, the record of our sweet affinity." From the old bookcase he picks a bunch of faded violets, kisses them, sinks on one knee and presses the scentless blossoms into her faltering hand, sighing: "You remember them—from Gaspard to Mignonette? Is our true love withered like the flowers which told our passion?"

"Oh, if I could believe them," sighs his sweetheart. "Yes, yes, your writing," she looks upon the yellow card attached. "You were true to me then."

"As I am true to you now," whispers the bohemian in frantic tone. "As I have always been true to you. Do you suppose, with you in my heart of hearts, that I would be villain enough to love ought but—Mignonette?"

Ambigüe's face, inspired by love and hope, has lost its worn appearance. He begins to look to Miss Hammond like the light hearted Gaspard of her school days. Her eyes begin to beam into his.

But their glances are interrupted by a noise in the closet marked "Linen." During the last few minutes, Georgina, who has been stoutly and silently battling with the rats, not daring to come out for fear Perriqué will discover her hiding in a gentleman's chamber, suddenly succumbs to a monster who has crawled up her crinoline, and yells: "The rats are biting me! Let me out! Save my life! The rats! The rats!"

Her shrieks produce general consternation and confusion; the actress, with great display of Grecian sandals and classic tights, springs upon a packing case, and the gendarmes, drawing their swords, take refuge from the rodents in the same exalted manner, while Gertrude, gathering her skirts about her pretty ankles, shudderingly turns to fly.

But Perriqué, being of stronger nerves, now scoffs: "It's that wretched Georgina. I wondered what had become of her!" Gliding to her adopted daughter, she whispers: "Perhaps now, with that impish Fortescue girl as another sweetheart in his room, you still believe in your scribbling Don Juan, my child."

Fortunately, Ambigue doesn't hear this. He has flown into the closet and is bearing young Mrs. Horton out in his arms. He seats himself paternally upon a provision box with the short-skirted matron

upon his lap, and observes sympathetically: "The child has fainted. Ah, Madame Perriqué, she was hiding from your severity. Quick, something to stimulate her!"

Alphonse, who has just come breathlessly into the garret, rushes to the provision closet and returns with a flask of brandy.

"This will revive you, *petite*," observes the dramatist, as all but the landlady draw round him, for Georgina is spluttering as he pours the liquor down her throat.

Probably Madame Perriqué would join the circle, but a young gentleman in traveling tweeds dashes into the door, looks astonished, and mutters: "That fool of a waiter, to bring me up here to the attic!" Seeing the landlady, he leads her apart and hastily whispers: "Don't you remember me—Georgina's brother. I have come to get her. Just arrived from Cannes, Madame Perriqué—detained there by the measles, as you know—totally recovered. Midnight train—I couldn't wait. Where is my sweet Georgina?"

"Oh, yes, of course, you are Jack. I remember you!" answers Madame Perriqué. "As you wished, I have kept your sister, Mr. Fortescue, very straight in childish innocence."

Here a piercing shriek is emitted by Georgina, for Ambigue has murmured: "Courage, *pauvre petite!*" and kissed her paternally.

At his bride's voice, the young Englishman flying from the rear of the garret, exclaims in horror: "My God, that villain is kissing my wife!" and would clutch the dramatist by the throat.

But the two gendarmes and Alphonse hold him back.

"Your wife?" exclaims everybody, as Ambigue stands the short skirted Georgina on the floor.

Holding out her hands, young Mrs. Horton lovingly cries: "Jack, my Jack!"

"How dare you kiss her, sir!" yells Horton, shaking his fist as he struggles with the gendarmes.

"Merely the salute of a father to a child," observes the dramatist urbanely.

At this the young husband would probably be more belligerent were he not so astounded at his bride's long pigtail and juvenile costume. He gasps savagely, glaring about morosely at everyone: "Who has dared to put my wife in short skirts?"

"I did," replies Madame Perriqué, "to keep men from making love to her. You requested me to stop Georgina flirting. As a school-girl she was immune from masculine attentions."

"Immune from masculine attentions!" shrieks the indignant bridegroom. "That ragged wretch had her on his knee kissing her."

"Pish, mine was but a baby kiss," laughs the bohemian.

"Dash it! Faithless one, why did you let him think you a baby?" breaks out Jack, upon his fluttering spouse.

But his bride is round his neck now, sobbing: "Don't be angry, Jack. It's all your fault, staying away because you had the measles. I'd have loved you if it had been the small pox."

This pleasant mention of malignant diseases makes nearly every one in the garret give the young couple a rather wide berth. But Madame Perriqué, who fears nothing, dashes upon them. "And you said you were her brother," she asserts severely to Jack. "Don't dare to try to browbeat me. You said your name was Fortescue. Good heavens, you've eloped with Georgina; that's the reason you dared not tell me! No wonder you didn't wish your wife to flirt. There's also another week's board due." And in a retired nook, cut off by two big packing cases, the three go into an animated domestic discussion.

The lawyer and Armande are still squabbling over matrimonial compromise; the gendarmes are en-

gaged in a campaign against the rats, as Alphonse, hearing the front door bell ring, leaves the garret.

"Observe, Miss Hammond," remarks Ambigue morosely, "had you not seen with your own eyes, you might have again misconstrued my innocent attentions to that child bride. Beware of appearances, Mademoiselle. 'Tis easier to wound the heart than to heal it."

"Oh, you are cruel to me now," murmurs the reproached one sadly, with trembling lips. She remembers that this man, when to-night a starving out-cast, thought of her peril, not of his despair.

At this moment Rosenbaum, who, having lost his chance of winning Gertrude, wishes to destroy the bohemian's also, suddenly observes maliciously: "Oh, he won't be cruel to you long, my dear Miss Hammond, when he knows how rich you are." Then he calls: "I wonder, Madame Perriqué, you let this out-at-elbows fellow make love to your daughter, who is now an heiress."

"Heiress!" ejaculates the landlady, coming to the front astounded. "You said Gertie had only a thousand dollars or so at the American Consul's."

"Aha, that's all you know!" laughs Rosenbaum. "Take good care of your adopted daughter. At the American Consul's you will learn that Miss Ham-

mond, by the death of her California uncle, who owned a gold mine among other things, has had left to her solely and individually an estate considerably exceeding a million dollars."

Though the young lady had already heard this from the American Consul, until this man's own words she had scarce been able to believe Rosenbaum's dastard perfidy possible. She merely looks at him, contempt in her sweet face, and murmurs: "You knew I was wealthy, and yet let me suffer even hunger in Paris!"

"I—I didn't wish to make you think me a fortune hunter by telling you of my desire for you, when you knew that you were rich."

This ingenious yet sophistical assertion is received by the gentle but spirited girl with an unbelieving scoff, though she reproaches the fellow no more, remembering that the American Consul had said he would have Mr. Daniel Webster Rosenbaum disbarred as lawyer for his atrocious action in the matter.

But this revelation has a crushing effect upon the bohemian; he mutters brokenly: "Over a million dollars—over five million francs! My God, were you to love me they would say I am as great a villain as that scoundrel."

"So you are, wretch!" asserts Madame Perriqué

promptly; then she commands sternly and proudly: "Take your hands off my daughter, the American heiress!"

"Heiress!" shrieks Ambigue. "Bah, it's all impossible. It is a dream. You, Gertrude, were starving and are Dives—and I, who was an outcast, am the idol of Paris. Somebody kiss Madame Perriqué, and then I'll know that I am crazy."

To dispel Moliere's illusion the manager of the Theatre Cluny enters hastily. Shown in by Alphonse, he mutters: "*Mon Dieu*, what a beastly hole!" then observes cheerily: "But tallow candles, attics and hunger produce genius, Ambigue, my dear boy!" and embraces him effusively. "I produced your play to-night. It made the greatest success of my career."

"Rousette," scowls the dramatist, shaking the manager off, "why didn't you notify me so that I might have enjoyed the first flash of triumph in my life?"

"A thousand apologies, my dear fellow; I thought you knew."

"Knew!" growls Ambigue, surlily, "I knew I had your cursed letter saying you postponed 'Calypso'!"

Here the manager again astounds the author; he replies: "But the money that guaranteed the expenses of your play's production came from you!"

"The money—from *me!*" The bohemian half-reels, taps his head and stammers with pale lips: "*Diable*, I must be madder than I thought!"

Gazing on him, timid and ashamed, Gertrude trembles, fearing he will guess her bounty.

"I am too much of a business man, my dear fellow, to let little differences between manager and author stand in the way," observes Rousette, rapidly. "I could not refuse to produce your play with your money in my hand."

"*My* money in *your* hand?" gasps the dramatist. "Egad, I wish it were in *my* hand. Then I might believe."

"This six thousand francs to guarantee me against loss for one week's production I will return to you to-morrow," continues the manager. "In fact, I may as well return it to you now. Your drama is not only superb, magnificent—but it has created a furor. The advance sales already indicate a prodigious run! I want all of your plays."

"Take them!" answers the bohemian carelessly, kicking a big case full of manuscripts. "I have only fifty. But you have six thousand francs for me. That's the greatest illusion of my life. Now I must be more than crazy."

"Oh, no, you are not. See, I return them to you. Will this make you know you are sane?"

Rousette draws out his pocketbook and places upon the table a packet of bills that causes the dramatist's eyes to grow glassy in his head with amazement. "They came to me with these two lines: 'Moliere Shakespeare Ambigue's guarantee for a week's performance of 'Calypso.'"

"My name, but not my handwriting!" ejaculates the author, seizing the paper.

Miss Hammond's face is now red as a summer rose; she falters to an obscure nook of the garret.

But Ambigue is examining the writing, crying excitedly: "*Ciel*, I have seen this chirography before—a girl's hand—where? Ah, Madame Perriqué's imposition book." Glancing over the pages, he exclaims: "Alice Ballard? No! Georgina Fortescue?—a hand like a butcher boy's;" then gasps: "An imposition, one hundred lines, 'I must not bite my nails in school, Gertrude Hammond.' The same dear handwriting." Darting upon the abashed young lady, he draws her to the centre of the room; here, kneeling at her feet, he kisses her hand and remarks: "Perriqué is right. These sweet little finger nails must not be bitten. It is a bad habit for an angel."

"You—you know!" His sweetheart hides her face in her hands and tries to struggle from him.

"That you are an angel who used the first install-

ment of your grand fortune to give the art of poor despairing Ambigue one chance—God bless you! And yet, I want not your money,” he asserts proudly and points to the packet of bills. “Success has given me money of my own,” then calls out cheerfully: “Rousette, I’ll trouble you for a little advance royalty.”

“I have not much in my pocket,” says the manager, good-humoredly, “but if a hundred-franc bill——” he passes Ambigue a note.

“’Twill do till the morrow!” observes the bohemian, arrogantly.

The American lawyer now comes eagerly towards them. “Rousette, as manager of the Theatre Cluny, I serve you with legal notice to pay my wife’s salary to me,” he says commandingly.

“Oh, Dan, do let me have a little of it,” implores the great artiste.

“Not a cent unless you love me like blazes,” cries the lawyer, impressively.

“I adore you,” murmurs Armande, and falls into his arms.

“Ah, reconciled,” grins Ambigue, then whispers to Rousette, with a wink: “For a week.”

His manner is now that of the old regime; he struts the floor like a marquis or a duke. “Alphonse,

I never gave you a tip before. Take this!" He hands the waiter the hundred-franc bill just received from the manager. "My first royalties. There's a case of champagne in that storeroom"—his finger indicates the grocery closet.

"I'm onto it," answers the waiter, and darts away for glasses.

"Not *my* champagne!" shouts Madame Perriqué, savagely. "And you hope to wed my daughter without my consent. Till she is twenty-five years of age, according to French law, I am her guardian."

"But—but the American Consul told me my whole fortune was in America, and I could wed in England," answers Miss Hammond, with spirit. Then her sweet voice pleads in softer tone: "Oh, Madame Perriqué, permit me to be generous to you because you gave me bread when I was starving; don't force me to become your enemy by not letting me marry whom I please."

The landlady knows on which side her bread is buttered. She ejaculates: "My darling; of course, you shall do as you please, but this is absurd—to think of wedding a poor bohemian—you with a fortune worthy of a prince."

"Then shè shall wed a prince!" asserts Ambigue, arrogantly. "Nothing is too good for Mignonette. I am a prince!"

At this extraordinary declaration exclamations of surprise arise in chorus, and Rosenbaum jeers: "By poker chips, a potentate!"

"Why this astonishment!" observes Moliere, suavely. "Is it unusual for American heiresses to wed French titles? I can give you, dear heart—" he kisses Gertrude's hand—"a name that, before the Revolution swept away the old *noblesse*, was very near the king's, and better right to it than many a parvenu aristocrat. It is not well for a prince to have his toes protruding from his boots, so I starved under a *nom de plume*. It would have been hideous to have the world scoff: 'Monsieur le Prince de Rohan has not enough food to put into his aristocratic mouth.'"

At the mention of this august name all stare at Ambigue as if they think him really mad.

"The Prince de Rohan!" ejaculates the manager, unbelievably. "The last member of that illustrious house, a cardinal, I think, died thirty years ago."

"There was a brother who passed away in the massacres of the French Revolution, who left a little boy concealed in Brittany. To save his life another name was given him. I, his son, can prove it by these papers. The estates confiscated, all grandeur's dead but the title, which lives in *me*!" answers Moliere

fishing out of a dilapidated portmanteau beneath his cot a little metallic case of documents. "These scrolls prove it! In fact, the only things real about me are my genius, my title and my love for you." He has seized his sweetheart's hand and is whispering excitedly to her ear fervent prayers of adoration.

"Oh, jingo, a future princess!" screams Georgina, and kisses Gertrude wildly.

"Oh, you dear potentate!" cries Madame Perriqué, and has Moliere round the neck.

"*Grand Dieu*, with the 'Prince de Rohan' on the bills," exclaims the manager, excitedly, "your play will hold the boards a thousand nights."

"Pish, let it run upon its merits!" scoffs Ambigue.

"But I—I don't want your title," falters Gertrude.

"And I have no use for your fortune," laughs her lover. "But husband and wife must bear each other's burdens. Under these circumstances, permit me to invite everybody here to a bohemian supper in honor of the coming Princesse de Rohan."

"Agreed!" cries Armande; while the two gendarmes seize sausages at once.

"Everybody help themselves, and Alphonse, the champagne, quick!" commands Ambigue, passing a bologna to his blushing yet laughing fiancée, while the rest in short order fall upon the provisions. Even

young Horton seems to have an appetite from his railroad journey.

"It is our last feast in the land of famine!" remarks the triumphant author. "To-morrow night—I have waited too long already—why not a wedding supper, Mignonette? Aha, those carmine cheeks, *pétite*—bride's blushes, bride's blushes!"

For Gertrude has hid her lovely head upon his shoulder and murmured: "Gaspard."

"You are too modest, Monsieur le Prince," grins Alphonse.

"I am!" answers the bohemian. "With such happiness before me—" his hollow eyes sparkle as stars as they gaze upon the beauty of his coming bride—"an ordinary man would go crazy; and I am sane enough to eat this sausage." Moliere's white teeth close philosophically in the big bologna; he passes crackers with aristocratic grace about among the company. Then he suddenly exclaims: "*Diable*, I wondered what made me diffident. Rousette, your cigar case, please. I haven't smoked this evening."

As the bridegroom contentedly smokes the manager's best Havana, and the others seated on provision cases in the careless attitudes of festive Bohemia eat what they can lay their hands upon and drink all within their reach, Rousette arises, and seizing

from Alphonse, who acts as Ganymede, a glass of champagne, cries: "I crave the honor of proposing the health of 'The Prince in the Garret!'"

"Pish, drink to me," said Ambigue modestly, "as the lover of Mignonette!"

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